

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Birds was produced by Callistratus¹ at the Dionysia of 414 and placed second; Ameipsias placed first with *Revelers* and Phrynichus third with *The Loner*.² *Birds* has the distinction of being the longest surviving comedy from antiquity (largely due to the multiplication of exemplificatory scenes after the parabasis), with the most adult speaking roles (22). Although the plot follows a pattern familiar from Aristophanes' other "heroic" plays—a complaint, a fantastic idea, its implementation following a contest, episodes exemplifying the consequences, and the hero's utopian triumph—it shows greater structural unity than in earlier plays, maintaining suspense by postponing the dénouement until the end, and momentum by having the Chorus Leader deliver the parabasis wholly in character; the plays of 411 show a similar concern for plot unity. *Birds* also has a spectacular chorus, each of whose twenty-four dancers seems to have represented a different bird;³ the

¹ He had already produced at least three plays for Aristophanes (*Banqueters*, *Babylonians*, and *Acharnians*), and would later produce *Lysistrata*.

² It is possible that Phrynichus was also the author of *Revellers* and Ameipsias only its producer.

³ Although a contemporary vase (Malibu, the J. Paul Getty

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lyrics are among Aristophanes' most elaborate and lovely; and the fantasy is truly aetherial.

Information about Aristophanes' career is scanty for the years between *Peace* (D 421) and *Birds*, the period of the Peace of Nicias. There is no sign of the partisan political engagement that had animated his earlier plays, and the datable fragments indicate a turn to mythological and other relatively apolitical subjects. Certainly the political environment had changed. Though the Peace of Nicias was not a true peace (the signatories remained mutually suspicious, and not all of Sparta's allies subscribed), Athens and its empire were quiet enough so that demagogic politics, Aristophanes' favorite theme in the 420s, had fallen into relative abeyance; he would not stoop to attack Hyperbolus, Cleon's successor, a target he declared fit only for lesser poets (*Clouds* 549–59). The political arena was instead dominated by the dashing young aristocrat Alcibiades, now making his first bid for ascendancy, and the wealthy Nicias, a veteran general and conservative stalwart. Their backgrounds, rival policies, and contrasting styles offered great comic potential, but since both were rightists hostile to demagogues (in 416 they colluded in Hyperbolus' ostracism), neither was much bothered by the comic poets.⁴

Birds fits this trend, differing from all of Aristophanes' other extant fifth-century plays in taking no topical issue, political or otherwise, as a theme, either expressly or, like

Museum 82.AE.83), which may illustrate our play, shows two identically costumed bird-dancers.

⁴ For the political biases of Aristophanes and his rivals see vol. 1, pp. 12–23.

Knights and *Wasps*, allegorically. To be sure, there is plenty of topical satire, but all of it is incidental to a fantasy that soars above the world's particulars to a conjured realm, where the most familiar hierarchies of empirical reality—earth and sky, nature and culture, polis and wilds, humans, animals, and gods—are blurred, reordered, or even abolished, and whose hero attains power surpassing even that of the gods.

Two old Athenians, Euelpides (“Confident”) and Peisetaerus (“Persuader of His Comrade(s)”),⁵ have abandoned Athens in order to escape their debts. Led by a jackdaw and a crow, they visit Tereus, once human but now a bird,⁶ to learn if on his flights he has ever seen a care-free polis where they could settle. But none of Tereus’ suggestions proves satisfactory, for no polis is carefree. Peisetaerus⁷ then asks about the life of the birds, which is carefree but lacks a polis. Suddenly he has an astonishing idea: to turn the scattered bird world into a mighty bird polis. Tereus summons the birds, represented by the Chorus. Being inveterate enemies of humankind, the birds are initially hostile, but Peisetaerus wins them over by pointing out that they were the original kings of the universe long before the Olympians took over, and by proposing a

⁵ The MSS’ “Peisthetaerus” is a grammatically impossible conflation of two original variants, Peithetaerus and (with the more usual formant) Peisetaerus.

⁶ Only this element of the myth of Tereus and Procne is relevant; its violent elements (15 n.) are ignored.

⁷ Or possibly Euelpides, for editors differ in assigning lines in the prologue; for discussion of the issues see H.-G. Nesselrath in *Museum Helveticum* 53 (1996) 91-99.

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plan: the birds will build an aerial city that completely occupies the sky; demand that the Olympians return power to them or face a blockade; and instruct humankind to sacrifice henceforth to the birds, for birds have the power to harm humans if they refuse, but also to give them every blessing if they accept. The birds are delighted with this plan and appoint Peisetaerus their leader; a magical root will give him wings. In the parabasis the Chorus Leader offers a cosmogony justifying the birds' claim to cosmic primogeniture.

Peisetaerus reappears newly winged, and names his new polis Cloudeuckooland. Scarcely has he begun the founding sacrifice when a parade of pests and profiteers, most of them satirizing familiar Athenian types, arrive seeking admission to the new polis; but none is admitted. Meanwhile Iris (Rainbow), messenger of the gods, is intercepted on her way to humankind to announce Zeus' command for a resumption of sacrifices; Peisetaerus contemptuously turns her away. Finally an embassy from the Olympian gods arrives to negotiate a settlement. But Peisetaerus, secretly aided by Prometheus (a traditional defender of humankind against Zeus, and a god held in great affection at Athens), talks them into complete surrender: Zeus will return his scepter to the birds, and to Peisetaerus hand over his thunderbolt and his regal power, personified by a maiden, Princess (*Basileia*, "Sovereignty"). In the finale, the Chorus praise and congratulate Peisetaerus as he weds Princess and becomes the new king of the universe.

The fantasy of *Birds*, though it is set far from Athens and lacks a political theme, nevertheless fits the utopian

mold of *Acharnians* and *Peace*: a hero expels, excludes, or renders harmless those forces human, natural, or divine that frustrate personal happiness or impede the common welfare. In this respect Cloudcuckooland is a cosmic avatar of Dicaeopolis' marketplace, a utopian counter-Athens. Peisetaerus too remains very much a contemporary Athenian in his restlessness, his enterprising cleverness, his visionary ideas, his persuasive skill (displaying distinct sophistic elements), and his expansive dreams of power. Like previous comic heroes he wins the freedom to have things his own way and to enjoy untrammelled feasting and sex; it is also made clear that everyone else—birds, humans, and even the gods—are better off under his new regime than they had been under the old (cf. especially 610, 1271–1307, 1605–15, 1726–30).

Peisetaerus' new regime has nevertheless been seen as a sinister affair, along the lines of Orwell's *Animal Farm*. This reading requires that we view the play as fundamentally ironic. But that is a technique unparalleled in ancient comedy, and on any straightforward reading we are always encouraged to identify with Peisetaerus, and therefore to approve of what he does. There is no sign of a coming fall (as in *Clouds*), no qualms or disapproval from the Chorus or any sympathetic character. Nor is there anything that would strike the average spectator as self-evidently sinister. Burlesque treatments of the gods, for example, and expressions of dissatisfaction with their rule are hardly rare in Attic drama, and Peisetaerus' remark that he is roasting "some birds who have been convicted of attempted rebellion against the bird democracy" (1583–85) is merely an incidental joke about the previous year's tyranny-scare and

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spate of prosecutions in Athens,⁸ and is of no importance to the plot of the play.

Still, the grandiosity of Peisetaerus' ambition, his subversion of the natural order of things, and his crowning apotheosis may fairly be thought hubristic even for a comic hero. Perhaps some spectators saw it that way, but probably not most of them, for Peisetaerus' ambition echoes the Athenians' own mood in the spring of 414. The previous summer they had dispatched, on the advice of Alcibiades, a great armada to conquer Sicily. According to Thucydides, who remarks on the expedition's "astonishing audacity" (6.31), the great majority of Athenians were stricken with "lust" for the power and wealth that this conquest would bring, were absolutely confident (*euelpides*) of success, and were so excessively enthusiastic as to view opponents of the expedition as disloyal to the city (6.24). Nor were Athenian spirits dampened even after a year of limited success in Sicily, the recall of Alcibiades from the command on a charge of impiety, and his subsequent defection to Sparta. On the contrary, the Athenians dispatched a second expedition to reinforce the first, and a few months after the performance of *Birds* even sent troops into Laconia in support of Argos (6.105), finally ending the Peace of Nicias.

The allusions to current events in *Birds* reflect this pop-

⁸ Cf. Thucydides 6.53-61. The absence of any reference by name to any of the some 65 men denounced or convicted in these scandals in comedies written between 415 and 410 (the period of Alcibiades' first exile) may be the result of the Decree of Syracosius, which somehow limited comic freedom (Schol. *Birds* 1297, Phrynichus fr. 26).

ular optimism: Nicias is praised for his strategic skill at Syracuse (363) and chided for delays (639); a would-be father beater is sent to the Thracian front (1360–71); and the reduction of Melos in 416, one of the most ominous episodes in Thucydides (5.84–111) and remembered after the war as an example of imperial excess, is the subject of a casual joke (186), as is the outlawry of Alcibiades (145–47). The Athenians were now at the peak of their power and confidence, with no inkling that within two years their great armada was to be utterly destroyed and their very survival cast into doubt.

Text

Four papyri preserve fragments of *Birds*; two of them are not cited in the notes: *PBerol.* 13231 + 21201(2) (V/VI), partially preserving lines 819–29, 859–64, and *POxy.* ined. (II), partially preserving lines 1661–76 (cf. Dunbar's edition, p. 733).

There are twelve independent medieval MSS and one leaf of a palimpsest codex (F). Among the pre-triclinian witnesses there has been much horizontal contamination, with only RS, VE (in the first few hundred lines), and AM/ΓU showing consistent affinity as groups; M9, copied from E before E was damaged, can be used to reconstruct E's lost text. Triclinius' text (q) was based on a MS or MSS closely related to ΓU; the MSS descending from its hyparchetypes t and p reflect at least two levels of Triclinian recension as well as later editorial activity.

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Sigla

- Π1 *PLouvre* ed. H. Weil, *RPh* 6 (1882) 179–85 (VI),
 lines 1057–85, 1101–27
 Π2 *POxy.* 1401 (V), lines 382–4, 460–61
 F Laurentianus 60.9 (X^{ex}), lines 1393–1454
 R Ravennas 429 (c. 950)
 S readings found in the Suda
 V Venetus Marcianus 474 (XI/XII)
 E Estensis a.U.5.10 (XIV/XVⁱⁿ), om. lines 222–601
 M9 Ambrosianus L41 sup. (XIV), representing E in
 lines 222–601
 A Parisinus gr. 2712 (XIVⁱⁿ)
 M Ambrosianus L 39 sup. (c. 1320)
 Γ Laurentianus 31.15 (c. 1325)
 U Vaticanus Urbinas 141 (XIV)
 a the consensus of the MSS above
 Vp2 Vaticanus Palatinus 67 (XV)
 H Hauniensis 1980 (XV)
 C Parisinus gr. 2717 (XV/XVI)
 L Holkhamensis 88 (XVⁱⁿ)
 Vv17 Vaticanus gr. 2181 (XIV^{ex})
 B Parisinus gr. 2715 (XIV^{ex})
 t the hyparchetype of LVv17B
 p the hyparchetype of Vp2HC
 q the consensus of pt

ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΡΑΜΑΤΟΣ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ, Ἀθηναῖος
ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ, Ἀθηναῖος
ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ Τηρέως
ΤΗΡΕΤΣ, ἔποψ
 γεγεννημένος
ΙΕΡΕΤΣ
ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ
ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ
ΜΕΤΩΝ
ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ Ἀθηναίων
ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ
ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α΄
ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Β΄
ΙΡΙΣ
ΚΗΡΤΞ Α΄
ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ
ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ
 διθυραμβοποιός
ΣΤΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ
ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΤΣ
ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ
ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ
ΤΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΣ θεός
ΚΗΡΤΞ Β΄

ΧΟΡΟΣ ὀρνίθων

ΚΩΦΑ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ
ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ καὶ
ΜΑΝΟΔΩΡΟΣ/
 ΜΑΝΗΣ, οἰκέται
 Εὐελπίδου καὶ
 Πεισεταίρου
ΟΙΚΕΤΑΙ Τηρέως, δύο
ΦΟΙΝΙΚΟΠΤΕΡΟΣ
 ὄρνις
ΜΗΔΟΣ ὄρνις
ΕΠΟΨ ὄρνις
ΚΑΤΩΦΑΓΑΣ ὄρνις
ΠΡΟΚΝΗ, ἀηδὼν
 γεγεννημένη
ΑΤΛΗΤΗΣ, κόραξ
 ἐσκευασμένος
ΟΙΚΕΤΑΙ, τοξόται καὶ
 σφενδονῆται
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑ

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

EUELPIDES, an Athenian
PEISETAERUS, an Athenian

SLAVE of Tereus

TEREUS, turned hoopoe

PRIEST

POET

ORACLE COLLECTOR

METON

INSPECTOR from Athens

DECREE SELLER

FIRST MESSENGER

SECOND MESSENGER

IRIS

FIRST HERALD

FATHER BEATER

CINESIAS, a dithyrambic
poet

INFORMER

PROMETHEUS

POSEIDON

HERACLES

TRIBALLIAN God

SECOND HERALD

CHORUS of Birds

SILENT CHARACTERS

XANTHIAS and

MANODORUS (also

called MANES),

Slaves of Euelpides

and Peisetaerus

SLAVES of Tereus

FLAMINGO, a bird

MEDE, a bird

HOOPOE, a bird

GOBBLER, a bird

PROCNE, turned night-
ingale

PIPER, costumed as a
raven

SLAVES, archers and
slingers

PRINCESS

ΟΡΝΙΘΕΣ

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὀρθὴν κελεύεις, ἥ τὸ δένδρον φαίνεται;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

διαρραγείης. ἦδε δ' αὖ κρώζει πάλιν.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τί, ὦ πόνηρ', ἄνω κάτω πλανύττομεν;
ἀπολούμεθ' ἄλλως τὴν ὁδὸν προφορουμένω.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

5 τὸ δ' ἐμὲ κορώνῃ πειθόμενον τὸν ἄθλιον
ὁδοῦ περιελθεῖν στάδια πλεῖν ἢ χίλια.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τὸ δ' ἐμὲ κολοιῶ πειθόμενον τὸν δύσμορον
ἀποσποδῆσαι τοὺς ὄνυχας τῶν δακτύλων.

2-1761 Πεισ- Dobree: Πεισθ- a

¹ The name (unattested for a real person) means "Confident."

² The name (unattested for a real person) means "Persuader of His Comrade(s)."

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The stage is arrayed as a wooded, rocky landscape, and the scene building represents first the Hoopoe's nest and later Peisetaerus' house; before it is a thicket. PEISETAERUS, carrying a crow, and EUELPIDES, carrying a jackdaw, enter by a side passage; behind them are their two Slaves, Xanthias and Manodorus, who carry the baggage.

EUELPIDES¹

(to his jackdaw) Is it straight ahead you're pointing us, toward that tree over there?

PEISETAERUS²

(to his crow) Blast you! *(to Euelpides)* This one keeps croaking "go back!"

EUELPIDES

Look, you wiseacre, what's the point of our trekking back and forth? We're goners if we keep rambling aimlessly every which way.

PEISETAERUS

I'm pitiful, letting a crow convince me to hike more than a hundred miles!

EUELPIDES

And I'm hapless, letting a jackdaw convince me to pound the nails off my toes!

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

10 ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὅποι γῆς ἐσμέν οἶδ' ἔγωγ' ἔτι.
ἐντευθενὶ τὴν πατρίδ' ἂν ἐξεύροις σύ που;

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐδ' ἂν μὰ Δία γ' ἐντεῦθεν Ἐξηκεστίδης.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἴμοι.

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

σὺ μέν, ὦ τᾶν, τὴν ὁδὸν ταύτην ἴθι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

15 ἦ δεινὰ νῶ δέδρακεν οὐκ τῶν ὀρνέων,
ὁ πινακοπώλης Φιλοκράτης μελαγχολῶν,
ὅς τῶδ' ἔφασκε νῶν φράσειν τὸν Τηρέα,
τὸν ἔποφ', ὅς ὄρνις ἐγένετ' <ἄνθρωπός ποτ' ὦν>·
κἀπέδοτο τὸν μὲν Θαρρελείδου τουτονὶ
κολοιὸν ὀβολοῦ, τὴνδεδὶ τριωβόλου.
τὼ δ' οὐκ ἄρ' ἦστην οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν δάκνειν.

16 <ἄνθρωπός ποτ' ὦν> Köchly: ἐκ τῶν ὀρνέων a

³ Excecestides was evidently vulnerable to the charge of having Carian ancestry (cf. 764) and thus of falsely claiming Athenian citizenship; he was ridiculed also in Phrynichus' *Loner* (fr. 20), produced at this same festival.

⁴ To judge from 1076–83, Philocrates (otherwise unknown) was a prominent wholesaler of birds.

⁵ In this myth, as dramatized by Sophocles (cf. *POxy.* 3013), probably in the late 430s, Tereus, King of Thrace, wed the Athe-

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PEISETAERUS

I've even lost track of where in the world we are; you, I suppose, could find our native land from here?

EUELPIDES

God no, from here not even Execestides could!³

PEISETAERUS

(*stumbling*) Damn!

EUELPIDES

Travel your own path, friend.

PEISETAERUS

He's really done us dirty, that man from the bird market who sells by the tray, that crazy Philocrates.⁴ He told us that these two birds would show us the way to Tereus,⁵ the hoopoe who once was human and turned into a bird; and he sold us that Son of Tharreleides⁶ there, the jackdaw, for an obol, and this crow for three obols. But they turn out to know nothing but nipping. (*to the jackdaw*) What are you

nian princess Procne, but on a later visit to Athens raped her sister Philomela, whose tongue he cut out to prevent her from telling anyone. But she depicted the crime on an embroidery she sent to Procne. The sisters avenged themselves by killing Itys, Procne's only child by Tereus, and serving him to his father for dinner. When Tereus chased the sisters with a sword, the gods changed him into a hoopoe, Procne into a nightingale, and Philomela into a swallow. The nightingale's song was regarded as a lament for Itys.

⁶ Evidently a man resembling a jackdaw, which is small and noisy, like the diminutive Asopodorus (Eupolis fr. 255), whom the comic poet Teleclides compared to a jackdaw (fr. 46) and who was perhaps the man referred to here.

ARISTOPHANES

20 καὶ νῦν τί κέχηνας; ἔσθ' ὅποι κατὰ τῶν πετρῶν
 ἡμᾶς ἔτ' ἄξεις; οὐ γάρ ἐστ' ἐνταῦθά τις
 ὁδός.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐδὲ μὰ Δί' ἐνταῦθά γ' ἀτραπὸς οὐδαμοῦ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἦδ' ἡ κορώνη τῆς ὁδοῦ τι λέγει πέρι.
 οὐ ταῦτ' αὖ κρώζει μὰ Δία νῦν τε καὶ τότε.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τί δὴ λέγει περὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

25 τί δ' ἄλλο γ' ἢ
 βρύκους' ἀπέδεσθαί φησί μου τοὺς δακτύλους;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐ δεινὸν οὖν δῆτ' ἐστὶν ἡμᾶς δεομένους
 ἐς κόρακας ἐλθεῖν καὶ παρεσκευασμένους
 ἔπειτα μὴ ἔξευρεῖν δύνασθαι τὴν ὁδόν;
 30 ἡμεῖς γάρ, ὦνδρες οἱ παρόντες ἐν λόγῳ,
 νόσον νοσοῦμεν τὴν ἐναντίαν Σάκᾱ·
 ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὦν οὐκ ἀστὸς εἰσβιάζεται,
 ἡμεῖς δὲ φυλῇ καὶ γένει τιμώμενοι,
 ἀστοὶ μετ' ἀστῶν, οὐ σοβοῦντος οὐδενὸς
 35 ἀνεπτόμεθ' ἐκ τῆς πατρίδος ἀμφοῖν τοῖν ποδοῖν,
 αὐτὴν μὲν οὐ μισοῦντ' ἐκείνην τὴν πόλιν
 τὸ μὴ οὐ μεγάλην εἶναι φύσει κεῦδαίμονα
 καὶ πᾶσι κοινὴν ἐναποτεῖσαι χρήματα.

BIRDS

gaping at this time? Do you mean to take us into these cliffs somewhere? I tell you, there's no passage here.

EUELPIDES

There isn't even a path around here, anywhere at all.

PEISETAERUS

Here's the crow saying something about the passage; yes indeed, it's croaking differently now.

EUELPIDES

What's it say about the passage, then?

PEISETAERUS

Nothing, only that it's going to chomp off my fingers!

EUELPIDES

(*to the spectators*) Isn't it terrible that just when we're ready and eager to go to the buzzards, we can't find the way? You see, gentlemen of the audience, we're sick with the opposite of Sacas'⁷ sickness: he's a non-citizen trying to force his way in, while we, being of good standing in tribe and clan, solid citizens, with no one trying to shoo us away, have up and left our country with both feet flying. Not that we hate that city *per se*, as if it weren't essentially great and blest and open to everybody to come and watch their wealth fly away in fines. No, it's that the cicadas chirp on

⁷ Sacas, "the Sacasian" (an Asian Scythian), was a nickname for the tragic dramatist Acestor (cf. *Wasps* 1221), who had evidently had trouble certifying his Athenian citizenship (cf. Metagenes fr. 14).

ARISTOPHANES

οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὖν τέττιγες ἓνα μῆν' ἢ δύο
 40 ἐπὶ τῶν κραδῶν ἄδουσ', Ἀθηναῖοι δ' αἰεὶ
 ἐπὶ τῶν δικῶν ἄδουσι πάντα τὸν βίον.
 διὰ ταῦτα τόνδε τὸν βάδον βαδίζομεν,
 κανοῦν δ' ἔχοντε καὶ χύτραν καὶ μυρρίνας
 πλανώμεθα ζητοῦντε τόπον ἀπράγμονα,
 45 ὅποι καθιδρυθέντε διαγενοίμεθ' ἄν.
 ὁ δὲ στόλος νῶν ἐστὶ παρὰ τὸν Τηρέα,
 τὸν ἔποπα, παρ' ἐκείνου πυθέσθαι δεομένω,
 εἴ που τοιαύτην εἶδε πόλιν ἢ πέπτατο.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὗτος.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τί ἐστίν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἡ κορώνη μοι πάλαι
 ἄνω τι φράζει.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

50 χῶ κολοῖδς οὔτοσὶ
 ἄνω κέχηνεν ὥσπερὲι δεικνύς τί μοι,
 κοῦκ ἔσθ' ὅπως οὐκ ἔστιν ἐνταῦθ' ὄρνεα.
 εἰσόμεθα δ' αὐτίκ', ἣν ποιήσωμεν ψόφον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' οἶσθ' ὃ δρᾶσον; τῷ σκέλει θένε τὴν πέτραν.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

55 σὺ δὲ τῇ κεφαλῇ γ', ἔν' ἣ διπλάσιος ὁ ψόφος.

BIRDS

their boughs for only a month or two, whereas the Athenians harp on their lawsuits their whole lives long. That's why we're trekking this trek, and wandering with basket, kettle, and myrtle boughs⁸ in search of a peaceable place, where we can settle down and pass our lives. Our mission now is to visit Tereus the Hoopoe; we need to learn from him if anywhere on his flights he's seen that sort of city.

PEISETAERUS

Hey!

EUELPIDES

What is it?

PEISETAERUS

This crow's been trying for quite a while to show me something up there.

EUELPIDES

This jackdaw's been gaping upwards too, as if to point something out to me. There must be birds around here. (*they approach the scene building*) We'll soon find out, if we make some noise.

PEISETAERUS

Know what you should do? Thump that rock with your leg.

EUELPIDES

You thump it with your head, it'll make twice the noise.

⁸ Implements used ceremonially in founding a settlement.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

σὺ δ' οὖν λίθῳ κόψον λαβών.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

πάνυ γ', εἰ δοκεῖ.

παῖ παῖ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί λέγεις, οὔτος; τὸν ἔποπα παῖ καλεῖς;
οὐκ ἀντὶ τοῦ παιδός σ' ἐχρῆν ἐποποῖ καλεῖν;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐποποῖ. ποιήσεις τοί με κόπτειν αὖθις αὖ.
ἐποποῖ.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ ΕΠΟΠΟΣ

60 τίνες οὔτοι; τίς ὁ βοῶν τὸν δεσπότην;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Ἄπολλον ἀποτρόπαιε, τοῦ χασμήματος.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ ΕΠΟΠΟΣ

οἷμοι τάλας, ὀρνιθοθήρα τουτῶι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὕτως τι δεινὸν οὐδὲ κάλλιον λέγεις.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ ΕΠΟΠΟΣ

ἀπολεῖσθον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐσμέν ἀνθρώπων.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ ΕΠΟΠΟΣ

τί δαί;

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Well then, get a stone and knock.

EUELPIDES

If you like, I will. (*knocking with a stone*) Boy! Boy!

PEISETAERUS

Hey, what are you saying? Are you calling the Hoopoe “boy”? You should say “oh, Hoopoe,” not “hey boy.”

EUELPIDES

Oh, Hoopoe! You’ll only make me keep knocking, you know. Oh, Hoopoe!

Enter from the stage door Tereus’ SLAVE, a bird with a large beak; Xanthias and Manodorus drop the baggage and retreat to the side; the crow and jackdaw fly away.

SLAVE

Who’s there? Who’s shouting for the master?

PEISETAERUS

God save us, what a beak!

SLAVE

Heavens me, here’s a pair of birdnappers!

PEISETAERUS

Imagine speaking so harshly, and not more politely!

SLAVE

You two are dead!

PEISETAERUS

But we’re not mortals!

SLAVE

Well, what are you?

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

65 ὑποδεδιὼς ἔγωγε, Λιβυκὸν ὄρνεον.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ ΕΠΟΠΟΣ

οὐδὲν λέγεις.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ μὴν ἐροῦ τὰ πρὸς ποδῶν.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ ΕΠΟΠΟΣ

ὁδὶ δὲ δὴ τίς ἐστὶν ὄρνις; οὐκ ἐρείς;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐπικεχოდὼς ἔγωγε Φασιανικός.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀτὰρ σὺ τί θηρίον ποτ' εἶ, πρὸς τῶν θεῶν;

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ ΕΠΟΠΟΣ

ὄρνις ἔγωγε δοῦλος.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

70 ἡττήθης τινὸς

ἀλεκτρυνόνος;

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ ΕΠΟΠΟΣ

οὐκ, ἀλλ' ὅτε περ ὁ δεσπότης

ἔποψ ἐγένετο, τότε γενέσθαι μ' ἠΰξατο

ὄρνιν, ἵν' ἀκόλουθον διάκονόν τ' ἔχῃ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

δεῖται γὰρ ὄρνις καὶ διακόνου τινός;

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ ΕΠΟΠΟΣ

75 οὗτός γ', ἅτ', οἶμαι, πρότερον ἄνθρωπός ποτ' ὦν.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Me? I'm a yellowbelly, a Libyan bird.

SLAVE

What nonsense!

PEISETAERUS

Really? Then check what's on the back of my legs.

SLAVE

And this other one, what kind of bird is he? Speak up.

EUELPIDES

I'm a brownbottom, from the Pheasance.

PEISETAERUS

(*to the Slave*) Say, what kind of creature might you be, in heaven's name?

SLAVE

Me, I'm a slavebird.

EUELPIDES

Vanquished by some fighting cock, eh?

SLAVE

No, it's just that when master turned into a hoopoe, he prayed that I become a bird too, so that he could still have an attendant and butler.

PEISETAERUS

Does a bird actually need a butler?

SLAVE

This one does. I guess it's because he once was human.

ARISTOPHANES

τοτὲ μὲν ἐρᾷ φαγεῖν ἀφύας Φαληρικός,
τρέχω ᾗ ἀφύας ἐγὼ λαβὼν τὸ τρύβλιον·
ἔττους δ' ἐπιθυμῶ, δεῖ τορύνῃς καὶ χύτρας,
τρέχω ᾗ τορύνῃν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τροχίλος ὄρνις οὐτοσί.

80 οἶσθ' οὖν ὃ δρᾶσον, ὦ τροχίλε; τὸν δεσπότην
ἡμῖν κάλεσον.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ ΕΠΟΠΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἀρτίως νῆ τὸν Δία
εὔδει καταφαγὼν μύρτα καὶ σέρφους τινάς.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὅμως ἐπέγειρον αὐτόν.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ ΕΠΟΠΟΣ

οἶδα μὲν σαφῶς
ὅτι ἀχθέσεται, σφῶν δ' αὐτὸν εἶνεκ' ἐπεγερω̃.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

85 κακῶς σύ γ' ἀπόλοι'. ὥς μ' ἀπέκτεινας δέει.

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οἷμοι κακοδαίμων, χῶ κολοιός μοῖχεται
ὑπὸ τοῦ δέους.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ δειλότατον σὺ θηρίον,
δείσας ἀφῆκας τὸν κολοιόν.

BIRDS

He'll get a craving for fish fry from Phalerum, and I grab the pan and run out for the fish. Or he'll want lentil soup, we need a ladle and tureen, so I run for the tureen.

PEISETAERUS

This one's a roadrunner. So, roadrunner, you know what you should do? Call your master for us.

SLAVE

Oh no; he's just started his nap, after a lunch of myrtle berries and gnats.

PEISETAERUS

Wake him anyway.

SLAVE

Well, I'm quite sure he'll be annoyed, but as a favor to you I'll wake him up.

Exit SLAVE.

PEISETAERUS

(calling after him) And to hell with you, for scaring me to death!

EUELPIDES

I'll be damned, my jackdaw flew away from me in terror!

PEISETAERUS

You utter scaredy cat, so frightened that you let him go!

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

εἰπέ μοι,

σὺ δὲ τὴν κορώνην οὐκ ἀφήκας καταπεσών;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μὰ Δί' οὐκ ἔγωγε.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ποῦ γάρ ἐστ';

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

90

ἀπέπτατο.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἄρ' ἀφήκας; ὦγάθ', ὡς ἀνδρείος εἶ.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἄνοιγε τὴν ὕλην, ἵν' ἐξέλθω ποτέ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ Ἡράκλεις, τουτὶ τί ποτ' ἐστὶ θηρίον;

τίς ἢ πτέρωσις; τίς ὁ τρόπος τῆς τριλοφίας;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

τίνες εἰσὶ μ' οἱ ζητοῦντες;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

95

οἱ δώδεκα θεοὶ

εἵξασιν ἐπιτρῦφαί σε.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

μῶν με σκώπτετον

ὀρώντε τὴν πτέρωσιν; ἦ γάρ, ὦ ξένοι,

ἄνθρωπος.

BIRDS

EUELPIDES

Say, didn't you fall down and let your crow loose?

PEISETAERUS

I certainly did not.

EUELPIDES

Then where is it?

PEISETAERUS

It flew off.

EUELPIDES

So, my good man, you didn't let it go, brave fellow that you are?

TEREUS

(*within, to his Slave*) Unbar the woods, that I may at last come forth.

Enter TEREUS from the stage door, with a hoopoe's head and wings, but few feathers; two Slaves accompany him.

PEISETAERUS

Heracles, what kind of beast is this? What plumage? What manner of triple crest?

TEREUS

Who be those that seek me?

EUELPIDES

The Twelve Gods seem to have made a mess of you.

TEREUS

You two aren't making fun of me, are you, for the look of my plumage? Because I'll have you know, friends, I was once human.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ σοῦ καταγελῶμεν.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἀλλὰ τοῦ;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τὸ ῥάμφος ἡμιν σου γέλοιον φαίνεται.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

100 τοιαῦτα μέντοι Σοφοκλέης λυμαίνεται
ἐν ταῖς τραγωδίαισιν ἐμέ, τὸν Τηρέα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Τηρεὺς γὰρ εἶ σύ; πότερον ὄρνις ἢ ταῶς;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ὄρνις ἔγωγε.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

κατὰ σοι ποῦ τὰ πτερὰ;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἐξερρήκε.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

πότερον ὑπὸ νόσου τινός;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

105 οὔκ, ἀλλὰ τὸν χειμῶνα πάντα τῶρνεα
πτερορρνεῖ τε καὶ θις ἕτερα φύομεν.
ἀλλ' εἶπατόν μοι σφὼ τίν' ἐστόν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νώ; βροτώ.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

It's not you we're laughing at.

TEREUS

What, then?

EUELPIDES

It's your beak that strikes us funny.

TEREUS

That's how shabbily Sophocles treats me—Tereus!—in his tragedies.

PEISETAERUS

So you're Tereus! Bird or peacock?

TEREUS

Me, I'm a bird.

EUELPIDES

Then where are your feathers?

TEREUS

They've fallen out.

EUELPIDES

From some disease?

TEREUS

No; in winter all birds shed their feathers, and then we grow new ones. But tell me who you two are.

PEISETAERUS

We two? Humans.

ARISTOPHANES

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ποδαπὸ τὸ γένος;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὅθεν αἱ τριήρεις αἱ καλαί.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

μῶν ἡλιαστά;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

μᾶλλὰ θάτερου τρόπου,
ἀπηλιαστά.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

110 σπείρεται γὰρ τοῦτ' ἐκεῖ
τὸ σπέρμ';

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὀλίγον ζητῶν ἂν ἐξ ἀγροῦ λάβοις.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

πράγους δὲ δὴ τοῦ δεομένω δεῦρ' ἦλθετον;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

σοὶ ξυγγενέσθαι βουλομένω.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

τίνος πέρι;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

115 ὅτι πρῶτα μὲν ἦσθ' ἄνθρωπος ὥσπερ νῶ ποτε,
κάργυριον ὠφείλησας ὥσπερ νῶ ποτε,
κοῦκ ἀποδιδούς ἔχαιρες ὥσπερ νῶ ποτε·
εἶτ' αὖθις ὀρνίθων μεταλλάξας φύσιν

BIRDS

TEREUS

What nationality?

PEISETAERUS

Where the fine triremes come from.

TEREUS

Not a couple of jurors, I hope!

EUELPIDES

Oh no, the other kind: a couple of jurophobes.

TEREUS

Does that seed sprout there?

EUELPIDES

You'll find a little in the country, if you look hard.

TEREUS

Now then, on what business have you two come here?

PEISETAERUS

We want to confer with you.

TEREUS

About what?

PEISETAERUS

Well, originally you were human, like us, and once owed money, like us, and once enjoyed not repaying it, like us; then trading all that for the guise of birds, you've flown the

ARISTOPHANES

καὶ γῆν ἐπέπτου καὶ θάλατταν ἐν κύκλῳ,
καὶ πάνθ' ὅσαπερ ἄνθρωπος ὅσα τ' ὄρνις φρονεῖς.
120 ταῦτ' οὖν ἰκέται νὼ πρὸς σέ δεῦρ' ἀφίγμεθα,
εἴ τινα πόλιν φράσειας ἡμῖν εὔερον
ὥσπερ σισύραν ἐγκατακλινῆναι μαλθακὴν.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἔπειτα μείζω τῶν Κραναῶν ζητεῖς πόλιν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μείζω μὲν οὐδέν, προσφορωτέραν δὲ νῶν.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἀριστοκρατεῖσθαι δῆλος εἶ ζητῶν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

125 ἐγώ;
ἤκιστα· καὶ τὸν Σκελλίου βδελύττομαι.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ποίαν τιν' οὖν ἤδιστ' ἂν οἰκοῖτ' ἂν πόλιν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὅπου τὰ μέγιστα πράγματ' εἴη τοιάδε·
ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν μου πρῶ τις ἐλθὼν τῶν φίλων
130 λέγοι ταδί· “πρὸς τοῦ Διὸς τοῦλυμπίου
ὅπως παρέσει μοι καὶ σὺ καὶ τὰ παιδιά
λουσάμενα πρῶ· μέλλω γὰρ ἐστιᾶν γάμους·
καὶ μηδαμῶς ἄλλως ποιήσης· εἰ δὲ μή,
μή μοι τότ' ἔλθης, ὅταν ἐγὼ πράττω κακῶς.”

BIRDS

circuit of land and sea, and your mind contains everything a human's does, and everything a bird's does too. That's why we've come to visit, hoping you know of a nice cushy city, soft as a woolen blanket, where we could curl up.

TEREUS

Could you be looking for a city greater than the Cranaans'?⁹

PEISETAERUS

Not greater, no, just better suited to us.

TEREUS

You're obviously looking for an aristocracy.

PEISETAERUS

Who me? Not at all. Even Scellias' son makes me sick.¹⁰

TEREUS

Well then, what kind of city would you most like to live in?

PEISETAERUS

One where my worst troubles would be like this: a friend appears at my door one morning and says, "In the name of Zeus on Olympus, make sure that you and your kids wash up and be at my place bright and early; I'm giving a wedding feast. Now don't let me down, otherwise you needn't visit me when I'm in trouble!"

⁹ Cranaus was a mythical king of Athens.

¹⁰ Aristocrates, a signer of the Peace of Nicias in 421, a general in 413/12, and a moderate oligarch in 411 (Thucydides 5.19, 8.9, 89, 92); here his name alone is the joke.

ARISTOPHANES

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

135 νῆ Δία τάλαιπώρων γε πραγμάτων ἐρᾶς.
τί δαὶ σύ;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τοιούτων ἐρῶ καὶ γώ.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

τίνων;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὅπου ξυναντῶν μοι ταδί τις μέμψεται
ὥσπερ ἀδικηθεὶς παιδὸς ὠραίου πατήρ·
“καλῶς γέ μου τὸν υἱόν, ᾧ στιλβωνίδη,
140 εὐρὼν ἀπιόντ’ ἀπὸ γυμνασίου λελουμένον
οὐκ ἔκυσας, οὐ προσεῖπας, οὐ προσηγάγου,
οὐκ ὠρχιπέδισας, ᾧ ἐμοὶ πατρικὸς φίλος.”

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ᾧ δειλακρίων σύ, τῶν κακῶν οἴων ἐρᾶς.
ἀτὰρ ἔστι γ’ ὅποίαν λέγετον εὐδαίμων πόλις
παρὰ τὴν ἐρυθρὰν θάλατταν.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

145 οἵμοι, μηδαμῶς
ἡμῖν γε παρὰ θάλατταν, ἵν’ ἀνακύψεται
κλητῆρ’ ἄγουσ’ ἔωθεν ἡ Σαλαμινία.
Ἑλληνικὴν δὲ πόλιν ἔχεις ἡμῖν φράσαι;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

τί οὐ τὸν Ἥλειον Λέπρεον οἰκίζετον
ἐλθόνθ’;

BIRDS

TEREUS

My word, it's miserable troubles you long for! (*to Euelpides*) And what about you?

EUELPIDES

I long for much the same.

TEREUS

Namely?

EUELPIDES

A city where a blooming boy's father would bump into me and complain in this fashion, as if wronged: "A fine way you treat my son, Mr. Smoothy! You met him leaving the gymnasium after his bath, and you didn't kiss him, didn't chat him up, didn't hug him, didn't fondle his balls—and you my old family friend!"

TEREUS

Poor thing, what troubles you long for! Well, there actually is a happy city of the sort you two are talking about, on the shores of the Red Sea.

EUELPIDES

Oh no, no seaside for us! Not where the *Salaminia* will pop up one morning with a summonser on board.¹¹ Can't you tell us of a Greek city?

TEREUS

Why not go and settle at Lepreus, in Elis?

¹¹ One of two sacred galleys in the Athenian navy (the other was the *Paralus*) used for official dispatches and transport.

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

150 ὅτιν' νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς ὅσ' οὐκ ἰδὼν
βδελύττομαι τὸν Λέπρεον ἀπὸ Μελανθίου.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἀλλ' εἰσὶν ἕτεροι τῆς Λοκρίδος Ὀπούντιοι,
ἵνα χρὴ κατοικεῖν.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' ἔγωγ' Ὀπούντιος
οὐκ ἂν γενοίμην ἐπὶ ταλάντῳ χρυσοῦ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

155 οὗτος δὲ δὴ τίς ἐσθ' ὁ μετ' ὀρνίθων βίος;
σὺ γὰρ οἶσθ' ἀκριβῶς.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

οὐκ ἄχαρις εἰς τὴν τριβήν·
οὐ πρῶτα μὲν δεῖ ζῆν ἄνευ βαλλαντίου.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

πολλήν γ' ἀφείλες τοῦ βίου κιβδηλίαν.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

160 νεμόμεσθα δ' ἐν κήποις τὰ λευκὰ σήσαμα
καὶ μύρτα καὶ μήκωνα καὶ σισύμβρια.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὕμεῖς μὲν ἄρα ζῆτε νυμφίων βίον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

φεῦ φεῦ·

ἦ μέγ' ἐνορῶ βούλευμ' ἐν ὀρνίθων γένει

BIRDS

EUELPIDES

For heaven's sake, Lepreus makes me sick, even though I've never seen it, because of Melanthius.¹²

TEREUS

Well, there are the Opuntii in Locris; you should settle there.

EUELPIDES

Not me; I wouldn't become an Opuntius¹³ for a talent of gold.

PEISETAERUS

But what about this life with the birds? Tell me about it; you know every detail.

TEREUS

It wears quite nicely. To begin with, you must get by without a purse.

EUELPIDES

You've removed much of life's fraudulence right there.

TEREUS

And in the gardens we feed on white sesame seeds, myrtle berries, poppies, and watermint.¹⁴

EUELPIDES

Why, you're all living the life of honeymooners!

PEISETAERUS

Aha, aha! Oh what a grand scheme I see in the race of

¹² A tragic poet, who apparently suffered from the skin disease *lepra*.

¹³ A man by this name is mentioned as one-eyed at 1294 and beak-nosed in Callias fr. 4 and Eupolis fr. 283.

¹⁴ Items associated in Athenian life with festive occasions.

ARISTOPHANES

καὶ δύναμιν ἣ γένοιτ' ἄν, εἰ πίθοισθέ μοι.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

τί σοι πιθώμεσθ';

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὅ τι πίθησθε; πρῶτα μὲν

- 165 μὴ περιπέτεσθε πανταχῇ κεχηνότες·
ὥς τοῦτ' ἄτιμον τοῦργον ἐστίν. αὐτίκα
ἐκεί παρ' ἡμῖν τοὺς πετομένους ἦν ἔρη
“τίς ἐστιν οὗτος;” ὁ Τελέας ἐρεῖ ταδί·
“ἄνθρωπος ὄρνις, ἀστάθμητος, πετόμενος,
170 ἀτέκμαρτος, οὐδὲν οὐδέποτ' ἐν ταύτῳ μένων.”

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

νὴ τὸν Διόνυσον εὖ γε μωμᾶ ταυταγί.
τί ἂν οὖν ποιοῖμεν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἰκίσατε μίαν πόλιν.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ποίαν δ' ἂν οἰκίσαιμεν ὄρνιθες πόλιν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄληθες, ὃ σκαιότατον εἰρηκῶς ἔπος;
βλέψον κάτω.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

καὶ δὴ βλέπω.

168 ἐστιν οὗτος Hermann: ὄρνις οὗτος vel οὗτος ὄρνις a

BIRDS

birds, and power that could be yours, if you take my advice!

TEREUS

What advice would you have us take?

PEISETAERUS

What advice should you take? For a start, don't fly around in all directions with your beaks agape; that's discreditable behavior. For example, back where we come from, if among the flighty crowd you ask, "Who's that guy?" Teleas¹⁵ will reply, "The man's a bird, unstable, flighty, unverifiable, never ever staying in the same spot."

TEREUS

By Dionysus, that's a fair criticism. But what can we do about it?

PEISETAERUS

Found a single city.

TEREUS

But what kind of city could mere birds found?

PEISETAERUS

Really, what an utterly doltish remark! Look down.

TEREUS

Very well.

¹⁵ Probably the son of Telenicus, of the deme Pergase, currently serving as a Treasurer of Athena; a wealthy politician (cf. 1024–25) ridiculed elsewhere for gluttony, political trickery, and shiftiness, cf. *Peace* 1008–09, Phrynichus fr. 21, Plato com. fr. 176. Here both the text and the point of the joke are uncertain.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

175

βλέπε νυν ἄνω.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

βλέπω.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

περίαγε τὸν τράχηλον.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

νὴ Δία

ἀπολαύσομαί <τί> γ', εἰ διαστραφήσομαι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

εἰδές τι;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

τὰς νεφέλας γε καὶ τὸν οὐρανόν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐχ οὗτος οὖν δήπου 'στὶν ὀρνίθων πόλος;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

πόλος; τίνα τρόπον;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

180

ὥσπερ <ἂν> εἴποι τις, τόπος.

ὅτι δὲ πολεῖται τοῦτο καὶ διέρχεται

ἅπαντα διὰ τούτου, καλεῖται νῦν πόλος.

ἦν δ' οἰκίσσητε τοῦτο καὶ φράξῃθ' ἅπαξ,

ἐκ τοῦ πόλου τούτου κεκλήσεται πόλις.

185

ὥστ' ἄρξετ' ἀνθρώπων μὲν ὥσπερ παρνόπων,

τοὺς δ' αὖ θεοὺς ἀπολεῖτε λιμῶ Μηλίῳ.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Now look up.

TEREUS

I'm looking.

PEISETAERUS

Turn your head around.

TEREUS

Yes, it would really do me good to sprain my neck!

PEISETAERUS

Did you see anything?

TEREUS

I saw the clouds and sky.

PEISETAERUS

Well then, surely that's the birds' site?

TEREUS

Site? In what sense?

PEISETAERUS

Their place, you might say. It's a place to *visit*, and where everything makes *transit*, so it's now called merely a *site*. But as soon as you settle and fortify it, this *site* will instead be called a *city*. And then you'll rule over humans as you do over locusts; and as for the gods, you'll destroy them by Melian famine.¹⁶

¹⁶ In summer 416 the Athenians had besieged the small island of Melos, and upon its surrender exterminated the adult males and enslaved the women and children, for refusing to join the empire (Thucydides 5.84–116).

ARISTOPHANES

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

πῶς;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

- ἐν μέσῳ δήπουθεν ἀήρ ἐστι γῆς.
εἶθ', ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς, ἦν ἰέναι βουλόμεθα
Πυθώδε, Βοιωτοὺς δίοδον αἰτούμεθα,
190 οὕτως, ὅταν θύσωσιν ἄνθρωποι θεοῖς,
191 ἦν μὴ φόρον φέρωσιν ὑμῖν οἱ θεοί,
193 τῶν μηρίων τὴν κνῖσαν οὐ διαφρήσετε.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

- ἰοὺ ἰού· μὰ γῆν, μὰ παγίδας, μὰ νεφέλας, μὰ
δίκτυα,
195 μὴ ᾗ γὰρ νόημα κομψότερον ἤκουσά πω·
ὥστ' ἂν κατοικίζοιμι μετὰ σοῦ τὴν πόλιν,
εἰ ξυνδοκοίη τοῖσιν ἄλλοις ὀρνέοις.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τίς ἂν οὖν τὸ πράγμ' αὐτοῖς διηγήσαιο;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

- σύ.
ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτοὺς βαρβάρους ὄντας πρὸ τοῦ
200 ἐδίδαξα τὴν φωνὴν ξυνὼν πολὺν χρόνον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πῶς δῆτ' ἂν αὐτοὺς ξυγκαλέσεις;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ῥαδίως.
δευρὶ γὰρ ἐμβὰς αὐτίκα μάλ' εἰς τὴν λόχμην,

BIRDS

TEREUS

How?

PEISETAERUS

Between them and the earth is air, no? So look: just as we must ask the Boeotians for a visa whenever we want to visit Delphi, in the same way, whenever humans sacrifice to the gods, you won't let the aroma of the thigh bones pass through unless the gods pay you tribute.

TEREUS

Oho! So help me earth, snares, gins, and nets, I've never heard a more elegant idea! I'd like to join you in founding this city, if the other birds concur.

PEISETAERUS

And who's going to explain the plan to them?

TEREUS

You are. Look, I've lived with them a long time, and they're not the barbarians they were before I taught them language.

PEISETAERUS

Then how will you call them together?

TEREUS

Easily. I'll just step right into my thicket here and wake up

ARISTOPHANES

ἔπειτ' ἀνεγείρας τὴν ἐμὴν ἀηδόνα,
καλοῦμεν αὐτούς· οἱ δὲ νῶν τοῦ φθέγματος
205 ἑάνπερ ἐπακούσωσι θεύσονται δρόμῳ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ φίλτατ' ὀρνίθων σύ, μή νυν ἔσταθι
ἀλλ' ἀντιβολῶ σ', ἄγ', ὥς τάχιστ' εἰς τὴν λόχμην
εἴσβαινε κἀνέγειρε τὴν ἀηδόνα.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἄγε σύννομέ μοι, παῦσαι μὲν ὕπνου,
210 λῦσον δὲ νόμους ἱερῶν ὕμνων,
οὓς διὰ θείου στόματος θρηνεῖς
τὸν ἐμὸν καὶ σὸν πολύδακρυν Ἴτυν,
ἐλελιζομένη διεροῖς μέλεσιν
γέννος ξουθῆς. καθαρὰ χωρεῖ
215 διὰ φυλλοκόμου μίλακος ἥχῳ
πρὸς Διὸς ἔδρας, ἵν' ὁ χρυσοκόμας
Φοῖβος ἀκούων τοῖς σοῖς ἐλέγοις
ἀντιψάλλων ἐλεφαντόδετον
φόρμιγγα θεῶν ἵστησι χορούς·
220 διὰ δ' ἀθανάτων στομάτων χωρεῖ
ξύμφωνος ὁμοῦ
θεία μακάρων ὀλολυγή.

¹⁷ Procne, cf. 15 n.

¹⁸ Euripides appears to have borrowed this description of the nightingale in *Helen* 1111–13, produced in 412.

¹⁹ Apollo.

BIRDS

my nightingale,¹⁷ and together we'll call them. If they hear our voices they'll come running.

PEISETAERUS

Dearest of birds, don't just stand there; please, I implore you, step into the thicket as quick as you can and wake up the nightingale!

TEREUS steps behind the thicket

TEREUS

Come, my songmate, leave your sleep,
and loosen the strains of sacred songs,
that from your divine lips bewail
deeply mourned Itys, your child and mine,
trilling forth fluid melodies
from your vibrant throat.¹⁸

(emerging on the roof as the piper begins to play the nightingale's song)

Pure the sound
that ascends through green-tressed bryony
to Zeus' abode, where gold-tressed
Phoebus¹⁹ listens to your songs of grief
and, strumming in response his ivoried
lyre, stirs the gods to their dance;
and from deathless lips arises
in harmonious accord
the divine refrain of the Blest.

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ, τοῦ φθέγματος τοῦρنيθίου·
οἶον κατεμελίτωσε τὴν λόχμην ὅλην.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὗτος.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τί ἐστιν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ σιωπήσει;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

225

τί δαί;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐποψ μελωδεῖν αὖ παρασκευάζεται.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἐποποποῖ ποποποποῖ ποποῖ,
ἰὼ ἰὼ ἰτὼ ἰτὼ ἰτὼ ἰτὼ
ἴτω τις ὦδε τῶν ἐμῶν ὁμοπτέρων·

230

ὅσοι τ' εὐσπόρους ἀγροίκων γύας
νέμεσθε, φῦλα μυρία κριθοτράγων
σπερμολόγων τε γένη
ταχὺ πετόμενα, μαλθακὴν ἰέντα γῆρυν·
ὅσα τ' ἐν ἄλοκι θαμὰ

235

βῶλον ἀμφιτιττυβίζεθ' ὦδε λεπτὸν
ἡδομένα φωνᾷ·
τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιό·

BIRDS

EUELPIDES

Lord Zeus, that birdy's voice! How it turned the whole
thicket to honey!

PEISETAERUS

Hey there.

EUELPIDES

Yes?

PEISETAERUS

Be quiet!

EUELPIDES

What for?

PEISETAERUS

The Hoopoe's getting ready to sing again.

TEREUS

Epopopoi popopopoi popoi,
ye ye co co co co
come ye hither every bird of fellow feather,
all who range over country acres
richly sown, the myriad tribes who feed on
barleycorn,
and the races of seed pickers
that swiftly fly, casting a cozy cry;
and all who oft round the clod
in the furrow twitter delicately
this happy sound,
tio tio tio tio tio tio tio!

- ὅσα θ' ὑμῶν κατὰ κήπους ἐπὶ κισσοῦ
 κλάδεσι νομὸν ἔχει,
 240 τὰ τε κατ' ὄρεα τὰ κοτινοτράγα τὰ
 κομαροφάγα,
 ἀνύσατε πετόμενα πρὸς ἐμὰν αὐδάν·
 τριοτὸ τριοτὸ τοτοβρίξ·
- οἳ θ' ἐλείας παρ' αὐλῶνας ὀξυστόμους
 245 ἐμπίδας κάπτεθ', ὅσα τ' εὐδρόσους γῆς τόπους
 ἔχετε λειμῶνά τ' ἐρόεντα Μαραθῶνος
 ὄρνις τε πτεροποίκιλος
 ἀτταγᾶς ἀτταγᾶς·
- 250 ὧν τ' ἐπὶ πόντιον οἶδμα θαλάσσης
 φῦλα μετ' ἀλκυνόεσσι ποτήται,
 δεῦρ' ἵτε πευσόμενοι τὰ νεώτερα·
 πάντα γὰρ ἐνθάδε φῦλ' ἀθροΐζομεν
 οἰωνῶν ταναοδείρων.
- 255 ἥκει γάρ τις δριμὺς πρέσβυς
 καινὸς γνώμην
 καινῶν ἔργων τ' ἐγχειρητής·
- ἀλλ' ἵτ' εἰς λόγους ἅπαντα,
 δεῦρο δεῦρο δεῦρο δεῦρο·
 260 τοροτοροτοροτοροσίξ,
 κικκαβαῦ κικκαβαῦ,
 τοροτοροτορολιλιλίξ.

BIRDS

And all of you who pasture on ivy boughs
in the gardens,
and you eaters of oleaster and arbutus
in the hills,
come flying at once to my call:
triototrioto totobrix!

And you who in marshy vales snap up
keen-mouthed gnats, and all who inhabit
the earth's drizzly places and Marathon's lovely
meadow,
and the bird with dappled plumage,
francolin, francolin!

And all whose tribes fly with the halcyons
over the deep swell of the sea,
come hither to learn the latest!
Yes, here we're gathering all the tribes
of neck-stretching birds,
for an acute old man has appeared,
novel in ideas
and a doer of novel deeds.

Now all attend the conference,
hither hither hither hither!
Torotorotorotorotix,
kikkabau kikkabau,
torotorotorolililix!

TEREUS disappears from the roof

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὀρᾶς τιν' ὄρνιν;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

μαὶ τὸν Ἀπόλλω 'γὼ μὲν οὔ.
καίτοι κέχηνά γ' εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν βλέπων.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

265 ἄλλως ἄρ' οὔποψ, ὥς ἔοικ', εἰς τὴν λόχμην
ἐμβὰς ἐπόπωζε χαραδριὸν μιμούμενος.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

τοροτιῖς τοροτίξ.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὦγάθ', ἀλλ' <οὔν> οὔτοσὶ καὶ δὴ τις ὄρνις ἔρχεται.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νῆ Δί' ὄρνις δῆτα. τίς ποτ' ἐστίν; οὐ δῆπου ταῶς;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

270 οὔτος αὐτὸς νῶν φράσει. τίς ἐστὶν ὄρνις οὔτοσί;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

οὔτος οὐ τῶν ἡθάδων τῶνδ' ὦν ὀρᾶθ' ὑμεῖς ἀεὶ,
ἀλλὰ λιμναῖος.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

βαβαί, καλὸς γε καὶ φοινικιοῦς.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

εἰκότως <γε> καὶ γὰρ ὄνομ' αὐτῷ 'στὶ
φοινικόπτερος.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Do you see any birds?

EUELPIDES

I certainly don't, though I'm all agape from watching the sky.

PEISETAERUS

Then it seems the Hoopoe copied the curlew, going into the thicket and crying hoo-poo for nothing.

TEREUS

(emerging from the thicket in panoply) Torotix torotix!

Flamingo appears on the roof.

EUELPIDES

Maybe so, my friend, but over here, look, a bird is coming!

PEISETAERUS

That's a bird all right! Whatever can it be? Surely not a peacock?

EUELPIDES

Our host here will tell us. *(to Tereus)* What kind of bird is that?

TEREUS

None of those commonplace birds you humans are used to seeing; he's a marsh bird.

EUELPIDES

My, how flamboyantly crimson he is!

TEREUS

Naturally, because his name is Flamingo.

Mede appears on the roof.

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὗτος, ὦ—σέ τοι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί βωστρεῖς;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἕτερος ὄρνις οὐτοσί.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

275 νῆ Δί' ἕτερος δῆτα χούτος ἕξεδρον χροιάν ἔχων.
τίς ποτ' ἔσθ' ὁ μουσόμαντις, ἄτοπος ὄρνις
ὀριβάτης;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ὄνομα τούτῳ μῆδός ἐστι.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

Μῆδος; ὦναξ Ἡράκλεις.
εἶτα πῶς ἄνευ καμήλου Μῆδος ὦν εἰσέπτετο;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἕτερος αὖ λόφον καθειληφώς τις ὄρνις οὐτοσί.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

280 τί τὸ τέρας τουτί ποτ' ἐστίν; οὐ σὺ μόνος ἄρ' ἦσθ'
ἔποψ,
ἀλλὰ χούτος ἕτερος;

²⁷⁵ χροιάν Zonaras 759 Σ S: χώραν a

BIRDS

EUELPIDES

Ho there, psst—yes, you!

PEISETAERUS

What do you want?

EUELPIDES

Here's another bird!

PEISETAERUS

Oh yes, that's another one all right, and he's also garbed in eccentric color.²⁰ (*To Tereus*) Who in the world is this vatic songster,²¹ this outlandish mountain-ranging bird?

TEREUS

His name is mede.

EUELPIDES

Mede? Lord Heracles! But if he's a Mede, how did he fly here without a camel?

Hoopoe appears on the roof.

PEISETAERUS

Here's still another bird who's secured a crest.

EUELPIDES

What kind of apparition is this? (*to Tereus*) Then you're not the only hoopoe, but he's one too?

²⁰ Adapting a line from Sophocles' *Tyro* (fr. 654), "What is this bird occupying an eccentric position?"

²¹ From Aeschylus' *Edonians* (fr. 60), referring to Orpheus or Dionysus.

ARISTOPHANES

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

οὔτοσὶ μὲν ἔστι Φιλοκλέους
ἐξ ἔποπος, ἐγὼ δὲ τούτου πάππος, ὥσπερ εἰ λέγοις
“Ἰππόνικος Καλλίου καὶ Ἰππονίκου Καλλίας.”

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Καλλίας ἄρ' οὔτος οὔρνις ἐστίν. ὥς πτερορρνεῖ.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

285 ἄτε γὰρ ὦν γενναῖος ὑπὸ <τε> συκοφαντῶν τίλλεται,
αἷ τε θήλειαι πρὸς ἐκτίλλουσιν αὐτοῦ τὰ πτερά.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὦ Πόσειδον, ἕτερος αὖ τις βαπτὸς ὄρνις οὔτοσί.
τίς ὀνομάζεται ποθ' οὔτος;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

οὔτοσὶ κατωφαγᾶς.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔστι γὰρ κατωφαγᾶς τις ἄλλος ἢ Κλεώνυμος;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

290 πῶς ἂν οὔν Κλεώνυμός γ' ὦν οὐκ ἀπέβαλε τὸν
λόφον;

BIRDS

TEREUS

This one here's the son of Philocles' hoopoe,²² and I'm his grandfather, just as you might say Hipponicus son of Callias and Callias son of Hipponicus.²³

PEISETAERUS

So this bird is Callias. He's shed a lot of feathers.

TEREUS

He's pedigreed, you see, so he gets plucked by shysters, and the females too keep plucking away at his plumage.

Gobbler appears on the roof.

EUELPIDES

Poseidon! Here's still another brightly tinted bird. (*to Tereus*) What's this one called, I wonder?

TEREUS

That one? Gobbler.

PEISETAERUS

You mean there's another gobbler besides Cleonymus?²⁴

EUELPIDES

If that were really Cleonymus, he'd surely have tossed his crest.

²² Philocles, nephew of Aeschylus and nicknamed "The Lark" (?476, 1295), wrote a tragic tetralogy *Pandionis*, which included Tereus' metamorphosis.

²³ For five generations the heads of one wealthy and distinguished family of the Ceryces clan had alternated these names; the current Callias was often ridiculed as a flagrant wastrel.

²⁴ A politician often ridiculed for obesity, gluttony, and effeminacy, and (uniquely in Attic comedy) for having thrown away his shield in battle (see 1470–81).

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλὰ μέντοι τίς ποθ' ἡ λόφωσις ἡ τῶν ὀρνέων;
ἡ 'πὶ τὸν διάυλον ἦλθον;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ὥσπερ οἱ Κᾶρες μὲν οὖν
ἐπὶ λόφων οἰκοῦσιν, ὦγάθ', ἀσφαλείας οὔνεκα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ Πόσειδον, οὐχ ὀράς ὅσον συνείλεκται κακὸν
ὀρνέων;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

295 ὦναξ Ἄπολλον, τοῦ νέφους. ἰοὺ ἰού·
οὐδ' ἰδεῖν ἔτ' ἔσθ' ὑπ' αὐτῶν πετομένων τὴν
εἴσοδον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔτοσὶ πέρδιξ.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐκεινοσὶ δὲ νῇ Δί' ἀτταγάς.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔτοσὶ δὲ πηνέλοψ.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐκεινηὶ δέ γ' ἀλκυών.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τίς γάρ ἐσθ' οὔπισθεν αὐτῆς;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὅστις ἐστί; κηρύλος.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

(*to Tereus*) But tell me, what's the point of the birds' cresting? Perhaps they've come to march in review?

TEREUS

On the contrary, my friend, they're like the Carians: they nest on crests for safety's sake.

PEISETAERUS

(*looking toward the wings*) Poseidon, will you look at that! What a hell of a mob of birds has gathered!

EUELPIDES

Lord Apollo, what a cloud of them! Whooee! They're so many you can't see into the wings anymore!

Enter the CHORUS, each member costumed as a different bird.

PEISETAERUS

That one's a partridge.

EUELPIDES

And that one's surely a francolin.

PEISETAERUS

And that one's a wigeon.

EUELPIDES

And that one's a halcyon.

PEISETAERUS

So what's that one behind her?

EUELPIDES

That one? A snippet.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κειρύλος γάρ ἐστιν ὄρνις;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

300

οὐ γάρ ἐστι Σποργίλος;

χαῦτηί γε γλαῦξ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί φής; τίς γλαῦκ' Ἀθήναζ' ἤγαγεν;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

κίττα, τρυγών, κορυδός, ἐλεᾶς, ὑποθυμίσ, περιστερὰ,
νέρτος, ἱέραξ, φάττα, κόκκυξ, ἐρυθρόπους,
κεβλήπυρις,
πορφυρίς, κερχνής, κολυμβίς, ἀμπελίσ, φήνη,
δρύοψ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

305

ιοὺν ἰού, τῶν ὀρνέων.

ιοὺν ἰού, τῶν κοψίχων.

οἶα πιπίζουσι καὶ τρέχουσι διακεκραγότες.

ἄρ' ἀπειλοῦσίν γε νῶν; οἴμοι, κεχήνασίν γέ τοι
καὶ βλέπουσιν εἰς σὲ καμέ.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τοῦτο μὲν καμοὶ δοκεῖ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

310/11

ποποποποποποπο ποῦ μ' ὃς ἐκάλεσε; τίνα
τόπον ἄρα νέμεται;

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

You mean there's a snip-it bird?

EUELPIDES

Isn't Sporgilus one?²⁵ And there's an owl.

PEISETAERUS

What? Who's brought an owl to Athens?²⁶

EUELPIDES

Jay. Turtledove. Lark. Reed Warbler. Thyme finch. Rock Dove. Vulture. Hawk. Ring Dove. Cuckoo. Redshank. Red-head Shrike. Porphyron. Kestrel. Dabchick. Bunting. Lammergeier. Woodpecker.

PEISETAERUS

Whooee, all the birds! Whooee, all the peckers! How they peep and run around, outscreeching one another! Say, can they be threatening us? Oh dear, they've certainly got their beaks open, and they're staring at you and me!

EUELPIDES

I think so too!

CHORUS

Whe-whe-whe-whe-whe-whe-where's the one who
called me? What
spot is he settled on?

²⁵ Sporgilus ("Sparrow") was a barber.

²⁶ Proverbial, like "coals to Newcastle."

ARISTOPHANES

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

οὔτοσὶ πάλαι πάρειμι κούκ ἀποστατῶ φίλων.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

314/15 τιτιτιτιτι τίνα λόγον ἄρα ποτὲ
πρὸς ἐμὲ φίλον ἔχων;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

κοινόν, ἀσφαλῆ, δίκαιον, ἡδύν, ὠφελήσιμον.
ἄνδρε γὰρ λεπτῶ λογιστὰ δεῦρ' ἀφίχθον ὥς ἐμέ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ποῦ; πᾶ; πῶς φής;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

320 φήμ' ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἀφίχθαι δεῦρο πρεσβύτα δύο·
ἤκετον δ' ἔχοντε πρέμνον πράγματος πελωρίου.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ὦ μέγιστον ἐξαμαρτῶν ἐξ ὅτου ἵτράφην ἐγώ,
πῶς λέγεις;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

μήπω φοβηθῆς τὸν λόγον.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

τί μ' ἡργάσω;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἄνδρ' ἐδεξάμην ἐραστὰ τῆσδε τῆς ξυνουσίας.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

καὶ δέδρακας τοῦτο τοῦργον;

BIRDS

TEREUS

Here I am ready and waiting, and not aloof from friends.

CHORUS

Wha-wha-wha-wha-wha-wha-what message then
have you got for your friends?

TEREUS

One that concerns our whole community, promotes our security, and is right, gratifying, and advantageous. You see, two men are here to visit me, a pair of subtle thinkers.

CHORUS

Where? How? What do you mean?

TEREUS

I'm telling you, a pair of old men are here from the human world, and they've come bearing the prop of a prodigious plan.

CHORUS LEADER

Ah, you've made the worst blunder since I was fledged!
What are you telling us?

TEREUS

Don't be flustered about my news just yet.

CHORUS LEADER

What have you done to me?

TEREUS

I've received two men passionately enamored of our society.

CHORUS LEADER

You've actually done this?

ARISTOPHANES

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

325

καὶ δεδρακώς γ' ἥδομαι.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

κάστὸν ἤδη που παρ' ἡμῖν;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

εἰ παρ' ὑμῖν εἴμ' ἐγώ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(στρ) ἔα ἔα·

προδεδόμεθ' ἀνόσιά τ' ἐπάθομεν·

ὃς γὰρ φίλος ἦν ὁμότροφά θ' ἡμῖν

330 ἐνέμετο πεδία παρ' ἡμῖν,

παρέβη μὲν θεσμοὺς ἀρχαίους,

παρέβη δ' ὅρκους ὀρνίθων.

εἰς δὲ δόλον ἐκάλεσε,

παρέβαλέ τ' ἐμὲ παρὰ

γένος ἀνόσιον, ὅπερ

ἐξότ' ἐγένετ' ἐμοῖ

335 πολέμιον ἐτράφη.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ἀλλὰ πρὸς μὲν τοῦτον ἡμῖν ἔστιν ὕστερος λόγος·

τὸ δὲ πρεσβύτα δοκεῖ μοι τώδε δοῦναι τὴν δίκην

διαφορηθῆναί θ' ὑφ' ἡμῶν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὥς ἀπωλόμεσθ' ἄρα.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

αἴτιος μέντοι σὺ νῶν εἶ τῶν κακῶν τούτων μόνος.

ἐπὶ τί γάρ μ' ἐκείθεν ἦγες;

BIRDS

TEREUS

Yes, and I'm glad I did.

CHORUS LEADER

And they're already somewhere among us?

TEREUS

As sure as I'm among you.

CHORUS

Oo, oo!

We are betrayed, we are impiously defiled!
Yes, our former friend, who browsed with us
in the fields that feed us all,
has broken our ancient ordinances,
has broken our avian oaths.
He's lured me into a trap,
he's cast me out among
an unholy race, that
since its very creation
has been groomed to be my foe.

CHORUS LEADER

Well, him we'll settle accounts with later; as for these two
codgers, I think they should give us satisfaction on the
spot, by being dismembered.

PEISETAERUS

So we're goners.

EUELPIDES

This damned mess we're in is all your fault, you know! (*gesturing toward the spectators*) Why did you bring me here
from back there?

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

340

ἵν' ἀκολουθοίης ἐμοί.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἵνα μὲν οὖν κλάοιμι μεγάλα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τοῦτο μὲν ληρεῖς ἔχων
 κάρτα· πῶς κλαύσει γάρ, ἣν ἅπαξ γε τῷ φθαλμῷ
 ἔκκοπῆς;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(ἀντ) ἰὼ ἰώ·

ἔπαγ' ἔπιθ' ἐπίφερε πολέμιον

345 ὀρμὰν φονίαν, πτέρυγά τε παντᾶ

ἐπίβαλε περί τε κύκλωσαι·

ὥς δεῖ τῷδ' οἰμῶζειν ἄμφω

καὶ δοῦναι ῥύγχει φορβάν.

οὔτε γὰρ ὄρος σκιερὸν

οὔτε νέφος αἰθέριον

350 οὔτε πολιὸν πέλαγος

ἔστιν ὃ τι δέξεται

τῷδ' ἀποφυγόντε με.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ἀλλὰ μὴ μέλλωμεν ἤδη τῷδε τίλλειν καὶ δάκνειν.

ποῦ 'σθ' ὁ ταξίαρχος; ἐπαγέτω τὸ δεξιὸν κέρασ.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τοῦτ' ἐκείνο. ποῖ φύγω δύστηνος;

346 ἐπίβαλε] περίβαλε Reisig

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

To keep me company.

EUELPIDES

To make me cry bitter tears is more like it.

PEISETAERUS

Now you're making no sense at all; how do you expect to cry once you've had your eyes pecked out?

CHORUS

Hi ho!

Forward march, launch a hostile
bloody charge, from all sides
put wings to them and surround them!
For both these two must howl
and furnish fodder for my beak.
For there's no dusky mountain,
no lofty cloud,
no leaden sea
to receive this pair
in flight from me.

CHORUS LEADER

Now without further ado let's pluck and peck these two.
Where's the lieutenant? Have him bring up the right wing.

EUELPIDES

This is it! Poor goner, where can I hide?

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὗτος, οὐ μενείς;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἴν' ὑπὸ τούτων διαφορηθῶ;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

355 πῶς γὰρ ἂν τούτους δοκεῖς
ἐκφυγεῖν;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως ἄν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἐγώ τοί σοι λέγω,
ὅτι μένοντε δεῖ μάχεσθαι λαμβάνειν τε τῶν χυτρῶν.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τί δὲ χύτρα νώ γ' ὠφελήσει;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

γλαῦξ μὲν οὐ πρόσεισι νῶν.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τοῖς δὲ γαμφώνυξι τοισδί;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὸν ὀβελίσκον ἀρπάσας
εἶτα κατάπηξον πρὸ σαντοῦ.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

360 τοῖσι δ' ὀφθαλμοῖσι τί;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὀξύβαφον ἐντευθενὶ προθοῦ λαβὼν ἢ τρύβλιον.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Hold your ground there!

EUELPIDES

And let them dismember me?

PEISETAERUS

But how do you expect to get away?

EUELPIDES

I've no idea.

PEISETAERUS

Well, I'll tell you what we should do: stand and fight, (*indicating the luggage*) and take up some of those kettles!

EUELPIDES

What good will a kettle do us?

PEISETAERUS

It'll keep the owls off us.

EUELPIDES

But what about those with the hooked talons there?

PEISETAERUS

Grab a skewer and plant it in front of you.

EUELPIDES

What about our eyes?

PEISETAERUS

Take out a saucer and shield them, or a bowl.

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὦ σοφώτατ', εὖ γ' ἀνηῦρες αὐτὸ καὶ στρατηγικῶς·
ὑπερακοντίζεις σύ γ' ἤδη Νικίαν ταῖς μηχαναῖς.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

365 ἐλελελεῦ· χώρει, κάθες τὸ ῥύγχος· οὐ μέλλειν ἐχρῆν.
ἔλκε, τίλλε, παῖε, δείρε· κόπτε πρώτην τὴν χύτραν.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

εἰπέ μοι, τί μέλλετ', ὦ πάντων κάκιστα θηρίων,
ἀπολέσαι παθόντες οὐδὲν ἄνδρε καὶ διασπάσαι
τῆς ἐμῆς γυναικὸς ὄντε ξυγγενεῖ καὶ φυλέτα;

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

370 φεισόμεσθα γάρ τι τῶνδε μᾶλλον ἡμεῖς ἢ λύκων;
ἦ τίνας τεισαίμεθ' ἄλλους τῶνδ' ἂν ἐχθίους ἔτι;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

εἰ δὲ τὴν φύσιν μὲν ἐχθροί, τὸν δὲ νοῦν εἰσιν φίλοι,
καὶ διδάξοντές τι δεῦρ' ἤκουσιν ὑμᾶς χρήσιμον;

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

πῶς δ' ἂν οἶδ' ἡμᾶς τι χρήσιμον διδάξειάν ποτε
ἢ φράσειαν, ὄντες ἐχθροὶ τοῖσι πάπποις τοῖς ἐμοῖς;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

375 ἀλλ' ἀπ' ἐχθρῶν δῆτα πολλὰ μανθάνουσιν οἱ σοφοί.
ἦ γὰρ εὐλάβεια σῶζει πάντα. παρὰ μὲν οὖν φίλου

BIRDS

EUELPIDES

Brilliant! A fine piece of improvisation and generalship. In clever stratagems you've already outstripped Nicias!²⁷

CHORUS LEADER

Eleleleu! Move out, level your beaks, no hanging back! Drag them, pluck them, hit them, flay them! First knock out the kettle!

TEREUS

(interposing himself) Say, you scurviest of all creatures, why do you aim to destroy and mutilate two men who've done you no harm, who are my wife's kinsmen and fellow tribesmen?

CHORUS LEADER

You mean we should show these men any more mercy than wolves? What enemies could we take revenge on more hateful than these?

TEREUS

But suppose they're enemies by nature, yet friends by intention, and they've come here to give you some beneficial instruction?

CHORUS LEADER

How could these men ever give us any beneficial instruction or advice? They were enemies of our very forefathers.

TEREUS

Yet the wise can learn much from enemies. Caution does save the day—a lesson you can't learn from a friend, but

²⁷ Probably a reference to the victory at Syracuse the previous autumn, Thucydides 6.63–71.

ARISTOPHANES

οὐ μάθοις ἂν τοῦθ', ὁ δ' ἐχθρὸς εὐθὺς ἐξηνάγκασεν.
 αὐτίχ' αἱ πόλεις παρ' ἀνδρῶν ἔμαθον ἐχθρῶν κοῦ
 φίλων

ἐκπονεῖν θ' ὑψηλὰ τείχη ναῦς τε κεκτῆσθαι μακράς·
 380 τὸ δὲ μάθημα τοῦτο σῶζει παῖδας, οἶκον, χρήματα.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ἔστι μὲν λόγων ἀκούσαι πρῶτον, ὥς ἡμῖν δοκεῖ.
 χρήσιμον μάθοι γὰρ ἂν τι καπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν σοφός.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἶδε τῆς ὀργῆς χαλᾶν εἷξασιν. ἀναγ' ἐπὶ σκέλος.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

καὶ δίκαιόν γ' ἐστὶ καμοὶ δεῖ νέμειν ὑμᾶς χάριν.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

385 ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδ' ἄλλο σοί πω πρᾶγμ' ἐνηντιώμεθα.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

μᾶλλον εἰρήνην ἄγουσιν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νῆ Δί', ὥστε τὴν χύτραν

τώ τε τρυβλίῳ καθίει·

καὶ τὸ δόρυ χρή, τὸν ὀβελίσκον,

περιπατεῖν ἔχοντας ἡμᾶς

390 τῶν ὅπλων ἐντός, παρ' αὐτὴν

τὴν χύτραν ἄκραν ὀρώντας

ἐγγύς· ὥς οὐ φευκτέον νῶν.

382 σοφός Hamaker: σοφόν Π2 a

BIRDS

the first lesson an enemy imposes. For instance, it was from enemies, not friends, that cities learned to build lofty walls and master warships, and that lesson safeguards children, household, and property.

CHORUS LEADER

Well, in our opinion it's possible to hear them out first; a wise person can in fact learn something beneficial even from his enemies.

PEISETAERUS

They look to be slackening their anger. Fall back by steps.

TEREUS

(*to the Chorus*) It's also the right thing to do, and besides, you should cultivate my good graces.

CHORUS LEADER

Well, we've surely never opposed you in any past dealings.

EUELPIDES

They're acting more peaceable.

PEISETAERUS

Indeed they are. So lower the kettle
and the two bowls;
and we should shoulder the spear—
I mean the skewer—and walk patrol
inside our encampment, looking along
the very rim of the kettle,
close in, since we mustn't run away.

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐτεόν, ἣν δ' ἄρ' ἀποθάνωμεν,
κατορυχησόμεσθα ποῦ γῆς;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

395 ὁ Κεραμεικὸς δέξεται νῶ.
δημοσίᾳ γὰρ ἵνα ταφῶμεν,
φήσομεν πρὸς τοὺς στρατηγοὺς
μαχομένῳ τοῖς πολεμίοισιν
ἀποθανεῖν ἐν Ὀρνεαῖς.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

400 ἄναγ' εἰς τάξιν πάλιν εἰς ταῦτόν,
καὶ τὸν θυμὸν κατάθου κύψας
παρὰ τὴν ὀργὴν ὥσπερ ὀπλίτης·
κἀναπνυθώμεθα τούσδε τίνες ποτὲ
405 καὶ πόθεν ἔμολον τίνι τ' ἐπινοία.
ἰώ, ἔποψ, σέ τοι καλῶ.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

καλεῖς δὲ τοῦ κλύειν θέλων;

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

τίνες ποθ' οἶδε καὶ πόθεν;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ξένῳ σοφῆς ἀφ' Ἑλλάδος.

²⁸ The Cerameicus, the potters' quarter where military funerals were held; cf. Thucydides 2.34.

BIRDS

EUELPIDES

But tell me, if we do get killed,
where on earth will we be buried?

PEISETAERUS

Potter's Field will take us.²⁸
You see, we'll get a state funeral
by telling the generals
that we died fighting the enemy
at Finchburg.²⁹

CHORUS LEADER

(to the Chorus)

Re-form ranks as before,
lean over and ground your temper
alongside your anger, like infantrymen;
and let's find out who these men may be,
where they've come from,
and with what in mind.
Hey there, Hoopoe, I'm calling on you!

TEREUS

And what is your wish in calling?

CHORUS LEADER

Who may these men be, and whence?

TEREUS

Two strangers from clever Greece.

²⁹ In the previous year an Athenian contingent had assisted in the siege of Orneae (~ *orneon* "bird"), a town in the Argolid, but its defenders slipped away and there was no battle; cf. Thucydides 6.7.

ARISTOPHANES

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

410 τύχῃ δὲ ποία κομί-
 ζει ποτ' αὐτὸ πρὸς ὄρ-
 νιθας ἐλθεῖν;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἔρως
 βίου διαίτης τέ σου
 καὶ ξυνοικεῖν τέ σοι
 καὶ ξυνεῖναι τὸ πάν.

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

τί φῆς;
 415 λέγει δὲ δὴ τίνας λόγους;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἄπιστα καὶ πέρα κλύειν.

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

ὁρᾷ τι κέρδος ἐνθάδ' ἄξιον μονῆς,
 ὅτῳ πέποιθ' ἐμοὶ ξυνὼν
 κρατεῖν ἂν ἢ τὸν ἐχθρὸν ἢ
 420 φίλοισιν ὠφελεῖν ἔχειν;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

λέγει μέγαν τιν' ὄλβον, οὔτε λεκτὸν οὔ-
 τε πιστόν· ὥς σὰ πάντα καὶ
 τὸ τῇδε καὶ τὸ κείσε καὶ
 425 τὸ δεῦρο προσβιβᾷ λέγων.

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

πότερα μαινόμενος;

BIRDS

CHORUS LEADER

And what chance
can have brought them
on a journey to the birds?

TEREUS

A passionate desire
for your way of life,
to share your home
and be with you completely!

CHORUS LEADER

What do you mean?
And what tales is he telling?

TEREUS

Incredible and beyond belief.

CHORUS LEADER

Does he see a way to cash in on his visit,
convinced that being with me
he'll overpower his enemy
or be able to help his friends?

TEREUS

He promises great prosperity, ineffable
and incredible, for he makes a convincing case
that you can have it all, what's here,
and there, and everywhere.

CHORUS LEADER

Is he insane?

ARISTOPHANES

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἄφατον ὥς φρόνιμος.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ἔνι σοφόν τι φρενί;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

430 πυκνότατον κίναδος,
σόφισμα, κύρμα, τρίμμα, παιπάλημ' ὅλον.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

λέγειν λέγειν κέλευέ μοι.
κλύων γὰρ ὦν σύ μοι λέγεις
λόγων ἀνεπτέρωμαι.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

435 ἄγε δὴ σὺ καὶ σὺ τὴν πανοπλίαν μὲν πάλιν
ταύτην λαβόντε κρεμάσατον τύχ' ἀγαθῇ
εἰς τὸν ἵπνον εἴσω πλησίον τοῦπιστάτου·
σὺ δὲ τούσδ' ἐφ' οἷσπερ τοῖς λόγοις ξυνέλεξ' ἐγὼ
φράσον, δίδαξον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

440 μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω 'γὼ μὲν οὔ,
ἦν μὴ διάθωνταί γ' οἷδε διαθήκην ἐμοὶ
ἦνπερ ὁ πίθηκος τῇ γυναικὶ διέθετο,
ὁ μαχαιροποιός, μήτε δάκνειν τούτους ἐμὲ
μήτ' ὀρχίπεδ' ἔλκειν μήτ' ὀρύττειν—

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὔ τί που

τὸν—

BIRDS

TEREUS

Oh, how unutterably sane!

CHORUS LEADER

There's wisdom in his heart?

TEREUS

He's the craftiest fox,
all cleverness, a go-getter, a smoothie, the crème de
la craft!

CHORUS LEADER

Tell him to speak, to speak!
For as I listen to the tale you tell
I'm all aflutter.

TEREUS

(*to his Slaves*) All right then, you and you take my panoply
back inside and hang it in the kitchen—knock on wood—
by the trivet. (*to Peisetaerus*) And you inform and brief
these birds about the proposals I summoned them to hear.

PEISETAERUS

I'll do nothing of the kind, not unless they promise me the
same deal as the monkey made with his woman, you know,
the knifemaker:³⁰ that they're not to bite me or yank my
balls or poke me in the—

EUELPIDES

You can't mean the—

³⁰ The various guesses in the scholia show that not even ancient scholars could explain this allusion.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐδαμῶς. οὐκ, ἀλλὰ τῷφθαλμῷ λέγω.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

διατίθεμαι ἄγῳ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κατόμοσόν νυν ταῦτά μοι.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

445 ὄμνυμ' ἐπὶ τούτοις, πᾶσι νικᾶν τοῖς κριταῖς
καὶ τοῖς θεαταῖς πᾶσιν,

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔσται ταυταγί.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

εἰ δὲ παραβαίην, ἐνὶ κριτῇ νικᾶν μόνον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀκούετε λεῷ· τοὺς ὀπλίτας νυνμενὶ
ἀνελομένους θῶπλ' ἀπιέναι πάλιν οἴκαδε,
450 σκοπεῖν δ' ὅ τι ἂν προγράφωμεν ἐν τοῖς πινακίοις.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(στρ) δολερὸν μὲν αἰεὶ κατὰ πάντα δὴ τρόπον
πέφυκεν ἄνθρωπος· σὺ δ' ὅμως λέγε μοι. τάχα γὰρ
τύχοις ἂν χρηστὸν ἐξειπὼν ὅ τι μοι παρορᾷς
455 ἢ δύνάμιν τινα μείζω
παραλειπομένην ὑπ' ἐμῆς φρενὸς ἀξυνέτον·
σὺ δὲ τοῦθ' οὐρᾷς λέγ' εἰς κοινόν.
ὃ γὰρ ἂν σὺ τύχης μοι
ἀγαθὸν πορίσας, τοῦτο κοινὸν ἔσται.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

No, not at all; the eyes, I was going to say.

CHORUS LEADER

I promise.

PEISETAERUS

Then swear to it.

CHORUS LEADER

Here's my oath: to be victorious by unanimous vote of the judges and the spectators—

PEISETAERUS

That you shall be!

CHORUS LEADER

but if I break my oath, to win by only one vote.

PEISETAERUS

Now hear this: the infantry may retrieve their arms and go back home, but should keep an eye on the boards for any notices we may post.

They give their "armor" to Xanthias and Manodorus, who take it inside, then return.

CHORUS

A treacherous thing always in every way
is human nature. But do make your case, for perhaps
you may divulge a good quality that you see in me
or some greater potential
overlooked by my witless mind.

Explain to us all this perception of yours,
for whatever advantage you may provide me
will be an advantage for us all.

ARISTOPHANES

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

460 ἀλλ' ἐφ' ὅτῳ περ πράγματι τὴν σὴν ἤκεις γνώμην
ἀναπείσων,
λέγε θαρρήσας· ὥς τὰς σπονδὰς οὐ μὴ πρότερον
παραβῶμεν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ μὴν ὀργῶ νῆ τὸν Δία καὶ προπεφύραται λόγος
εἷς μοι,
ὃν διαμάττειν κωλύει οὐδέν. φέρε, παῖ, στέφανον·
καταχεῖσθαι
κατὰ χειρὸς ὕδωρ φερέτω ταχύ τις.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

δειπνήσειν μέλλομεν; ἢ τί;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

465 μὰ Δί' ἀλλὰ λέγειν ζητῶ τι πάλαι, μέγα καὶ
λαρινὸν ἔπος τι,
ὅ τι τὴν τούτων θραύσει ψυχὴν. οὕτως ὑμῶν
ὑπεραλγῶ,
οἵτινες ὄντες πρότερον βασιλῆς—

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ἡμεῖς βασιλῆς; τίνος;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὑμεῖς

πάντων ὅπόσ' ἔστιν, ἐμοῦ πρῶτον, τουδί, καὶ τοῦ
Διὸς αὐτοῦ,

BIRDS

CHORUS LEADER

Now then, about this idea of yours that you've come to sell us: explain what kind of business it is, and never fear, we won't break the truce before you've had your say.

PEISETAERUS

Well, I'm positively bursting to tell you, and I've got a special speech all whipped up, so nothing's stopping me from kneading it right into cake. (*to the Slaves*) Bring me a garland, boy, and one of you fetch water to pour over my hands, right away.

EUELPIDES

Are we getting ready for dinner, or what?

PEISETAERUS

No no, it's just that for quite some time I've been trying to put something into words, a big juicy utterance that will shatter these birds to the very soul. (*to the birds*) So sorrowful am I on your account, who once were kings—

CHORUS LEADER

Us kings? Of what?

PEISETAERUS

Yes you, kings of all that exists—starting with yours truly and including Zeus himself—and born a long time before

⁴⁶¹ *πρότερον* Π2 a: *πρότεροι* Hermann

ARISTOPHANES

ἀρχαιότεροι πρότεροί τε Κρόνου καὶ Τιτάνων
ἐγένεσθε
καὶ Γῆς.

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

καὶ Γῆς;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νὴ τὸν Ἀπόλλω.

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

470 *τουτὶ μὰ Δί' οὐκ ἐπεπύσμην.*

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀμαθὴς γὰρ ἔφυς κοῦ πολυπράγμων, οὐδ' Αἴσωπον
πεπάτηκας,

ὃς ἔφασκε λέγων κορυδὸν πάντων πρώτην ὄρνιθα
γενέσθαι,

προτέραν τῆς γῆς, καὶ πάλιν νόσῳ τὸν πατέρ' αὐτῆς
ἀποθνήσκειν.

γῆν δ' οὐκ εἶναι, τὸν δὲ προκείσθαι πεμπταῖον· τὴν
δ' ἀποροῦσαν

475 ὑπ' ἀμνηχανίας τὸν πατέρ' αὐτῆς ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ
κατορύξαι.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὁ πατήρ ἄρα τῆς κορυδοῦ νυνὶ κεῖται τεθνεὺς
Κεφαλῇσιν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ οὖν δῆτ' εἰ πρότεροι μὲν γῆς, πρότεροι δὲ θεῶν
ἐγένοντο,

BIRDS

Cronus, and the Titans, and even Earth.³¹

CHORUS LEADER

Even Earth?

PEISETAERUS

I swear by Apollo.

CHORUS LEADER

I certainly never heard that.

PEISETAERUS

That's because you're naturally ignorant and uninquisitive, and you haven't thumbed your Aesop.³² He says in his fable that the Lark was the first of all birds to be born, before Earth; and then her father died of a disease, but there being no earth, he'd lain out for four days³³ and she was at a loss what to do, until in desperation she buried her father in her own head.

EUELPIDES

So that's why to this day the Lark's father lies dead in the Head.³⁴

PEISETAERUS

So if they were born before Earth and before the gods,

³¹ For the standard divine succession myth see Hesiod, *Theogony* 133–210.

³² The legendary animal fabulist, thought to have lived in early sixth-century Samos.

³³ In Athens the "laying out" was held the day after death, and burial followed the next morning.

³⁴ The deme Cephale ("Head") was the site of a large cemetery. There is perhaps another reference to Philocles the Lark (281 n.), since a Philocles of Cephale is attested in the fourth century (PA 14546).

ARISTOPHANES

ὥς πρεσβυτάτων ὄντων αὐτῶν ὀρθῶς ἐσθ' ἢ
 βασιλεία;

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Ἀπόλλω.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

πάνυ τοίνυν χρὴ ῥύγχος βόσκειν σε τὸ λοιπόν·
 480 οὐκ ἀποδώσει ταχέως ὁ Ζεὺς τὸ σκῆπτρον τῷ
 δρυκολάπτῃ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὥς δ' οὐχὶ θεοὶ τοίνυν ἦρχον τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸ
 παλαιόν,
 ἀλλ' ὄρنيθες, κᾶβασίλενον, πόλλ' ἐστὶ τεκμήρια
 τούτων.
 αὐτίκα δ' ὑμῖν πρῶτ' ἐπιδείξω τὸν ἀλεκτρυόν', ὥς
 ἐτυράννῃ
 ἦρχέ τε Περσῶν πρῶτος πάντων, Δαρείων καὶ
 Μεγαβάζων,
 485 ὥστε καλεῖται Περσικὸς ὄρνις ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἔτ'
 ἐκείνης.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

διὰ ταῦτ' ἄρ' ἔχων καὶ νῦν ὥσπερ βασιλεὺς ὁ
 μέγας διαβάσκει
 ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς τὴν κυρβασίαν τῶν ὀρνίθων μόνος
 ὀρθήν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔτῳ δ' ἰσχυέ τε καὶ μέγας ἦν τότε καὶ πολὺς, ὥστ'
 ἔτι καὶ νῦν

BIRDS

doesn't it follow that the kingship is rightfully theirs by primogeniture?

CHORUS LEADER

I swear by Apollo.

EUELPIDES

Then from now on you should make a point of growing a beak—Zeus won't be quick to return his sceptre to the woodpecker!

PEISETAERUS

Now then, in olden days it wasn't gods who ruled mankind and were kings, but birds, and I can prove this with arguments galore. For example, I'll start by showing you that the cock first ruled and reigned over the Persians, before all those Dariuses and Megabazuses,³⁵ and that's why he's still called the Persian Bird, in memory of that reign.

EUELPIDES

So that's why to this day he struts about like the Great King, the only bird who gets to wear his hat cocked!

PEISETAERUS

Such was his authority, so great and mighty was he then,

³⁵ Darius I reigned 522–486 and was repulsed by the Athenians at Marathon in 490; Megabazus (in Greek the name suggests "big-talker") was a commander during his reign.

ARISTOPHANES

ὑπὸ τῆς ῥώμης τῆς τότε ἐκείνης, ὁπότεν μόνον
 ὄρθριον ἄσση,
 490 ἀναπηδῶσιν πάντες ἐπ' ἔργον, χαλκῆς, κεραμῆς,
 σκυλοδέψαι,
 σκυτῆς, βαλανῆς, ἀλφिताμοιβοί,
 τορνευτολურασπιδοπηγοί·
 οἱ δὲ βαδίζουσ' ὑποδησάμενοι νύκτωρ—

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐμὲ τοῦτό γ' ἐρώτα.
 χλαῖναν γὰρ ἀπώλεσ' ὁ μοχθηρὸς Φρυγίων ἐρίων
 διὰ τοῦτον.
 εἰς δεκάτην γάρ ποτε παιδαρίου κληθεὶς ὑπέπινον
 ἐν ἄστει,
 495 κᾶρτι καθηῦδον· καὶ πρὶν δειπνεῖν τοὺς ἄλλους
 οὗτος ἄρ' ἦσεν·
 καγὼ νομίσας ὄρθρον ἐχώρουν Ἀλιμουντάδε, κᾶρτι
 προκύνπτω
 ἔξω τείχους, καὶ λωποδύτης παίει ῥοπάλῳ με τὸ
 νῶτον·
 καγὼ πίπτω μέλλω τε βοᾶν, ὁ δ' ἀπέβλισε
 θοῖμάτιόν μου.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἰκτῖνος δ' οὖν τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἦρχεν τότε
 καβασίλευεν.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

τῶν Ἑλλήνων;

BIRDS

that even to this day, as a result of that long-ago power, he has only to sing reveille and everyone jumps up to work, smiths, potters, tanners, cobblers, bathmen, grain traders, the whole carpentering, lyre-pegging, shield-fastening lot. In the dark men put on their shoes and set forth—

EUELPIDES

I'll vouch for that! I, poor bastard, lost a cloak of Phrygian wool, thanks to him. I'd been invited to the city for a child's naming day, and had a bit to drink, and had just fallen asleep when right before dinner that bird up and crowed. I thought it was morning and set off for Halimus. And no sooner do I pop outside the city walls than a mugger clouts me from behind with a club. I fall down, and I'm getting ready to shout for help, but he's already extracted my coat!

PEISETAERUS

To resume: back then the kite was the ruler and king over the Greeks.

CHORUS LEADER

Over the Greeks?

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

500 καὶ κατέδειξέν γ' οὗτος πρῶτος βασιλεύων
προκυλινδεῖσθαι τοῖς ἱκτίνοισ.

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

νῆ τὸν Διόνυσον, ἐγὼ γοῦν
ἐκυλινδούμην ἱκτῖνον ἰδών· κᾶθ' ὕπτιος ὦν
ἀναχάσκων
ὀβολὸν κατεβρόχθισα· κᾶτα κενὸν τὸν θύλακον
οἴκαδ' ἀφείλκων.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Αἰγύπτου δ' αὖ καὶ Φοινίκης πάσης κόκκυξ
βασιλεὺς ἦν·
505 χῶπόθ' ὁ κόκκυξ εἴποι κόκκυ, τότ' ἂν οἱ Φοίνικες
ἅπαντες
τοὺς πυρούς ἂν καὶ τὰς κριθὰς ἐν τοῖς πεδίοις
ἐθέριζον.

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τοῦτ' ἄρ' ἐκείν' ἦν τοῦπος ἀληθῶς· κόκκυ, ψωλοὶ
πεδίονδε.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἦρχον δ' οὕτω σφόδρα τὴν ἀρχήν, ὥστ' εἴ τις καὶ
βασιλεῖοι
ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν τῶν Ἑλλήνων Ἀγαμέμνων ἢ
Μενέλαος,
510 ἐπὶ τῶν σκῆπτρων ἐκάθητ' ὄρνις μετέχων ὃ τι
δωροδοκοίη.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

That's right, and as king he instituted the custom of rolling on the ground before kites.³⁶

EUELPIDES

So help me Dionysus, I rolled when I saw a kite, and when I was on my back with my mouth open I swallowed an obol,³⁷ so I had to lug my sack home empty.

PEISETAERUS

And furthermore, the cuckoo was king of all Egypt and Phoenicia; and whenever the cuckoo said "cuckoo," all the Phoenicians would start reaping the wheat and barley in their fields.

EUELPIDES

So that's the real meaning of the saying, "Cuckoo! Knobs out and up country!"³⁸

PEISETAERUS

And so dominant was their dominion that in the Greek cities if some Agamemnon or Menelaus ever *was* king, a bird would be perched on his sceptre, getting a share of any presents he received.

³⁶ At their first appearance each year, as being harbingers of spring.

³⁷ Lacking pockets, Athenians carried small coins in their mouths.

³⁸ Perhaps a reveille call meaning "arise and prepare to march"; "knobs" translates *psoloi*, a word referring to men with *glandes penis* ("knobs") exposed: in the case of Greeks, by erection, of barbarians, by circumcision.

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τουτὶ τοίνυν οὐκ ἤδη ᾿γώ· καὶ δῆτά μ' ἐλάμβανε
θαῦμα,
ὁπότ' ἐξέλθοι Πρίαμός τις ἔχων ὄρνιν ἐν τοῖσι
τραγωδοῖς,
ὁ δ' ἄρ' εἰστήκει τὸν Λυσικράτη τηρῶν ὅ τι
δωροδοκοίη.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὁ δὲ δεινότατόν <γ> ἐστὶν ἀπάντων, ὁ Ζεὺς γὰρ ὁ
νῦν βασιλεύων
515 αἰετὸν ὄρνιν ἔστηκεν ἔχων ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς
βασιλεὺς ὢν,
ἡ δ' αὖ θυγάτηρ γλαῦχ', ὁ δ' Ἀπόλλων ὡς θεράπων
ὢν ἰέρακα.

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

νῆ τὴν Δήμητρ' εὖ ταῦτα λέγεις. τίνος οὔνεκα ταῦτ'
ἄρ' ἔχουσιν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἴν' ὅταν θύων τις ἔπειτ' αὐτοῖς εἰς τὴν χεῖρ', ὡς
νόμος ἐστίν,
τὰ σπλάγχνα διδῶ, τοῦ Διὸς αὐτοὶ πρότεροι τὰ
σπλάγχνα λάβωσιν.
520 ὦμνυ τ' οὐδεὶς τότ' <ἂν> ἀνθρώπων θεόν, ἀλλ'
ὄρνιθας ἅπαντες.
Λάμπων δ' ὦμνυσ' ἔτι καὶ νυνὶ τὸν χῆν', ὅταν
ἐξαπατᾷ τι.

BIRDS

EUELPIDES

You know, that's something I never realized. I was always bewildered when in the tragedies someone like Priam came on with a bird, but of course it was perched there to take note of whatever presents Lysicrates³⁹ pocketed.

PEISETAERUS

But the most impressive proof of all is that Zeus, the current king, stands there with an eagle on his head as an emblem of his royalty, as does his daughter⁴⁰ with an owl, and Apollo, being a servant, with a hawk.

CHORUS LEADER

By Demeter, that's right—but why have they got them?

PEISETAERUS

So that when someone makes a sacrifice and puts the innards into the god's hand, as the custom goes, the birds themselves can grab the innards before Zeus can! And in those days not a soul would swear by a god; they all swore by birds. Even today Lampon⁴¹ swears "by Goose" when

³⁹ Evidently an office holder or politician; the name is not uncommon.

⁴⁰ Athena.

⁴¹ A distinguished authority on oracles and religious protocol, and prominent in public life since the 440s; ridiculed elsewhere in comedy for high living.

οὕτως ὑμᾶς πάντες πρότερον μεγάλους ἁγίους τ'
ἐνόμιζον,

νῦν δ' ἀνδράποδ', ἡλιθίους, Μανᾶς.

ὥσπερ δ' ἤδη τοὺς μαινομένους

525 βάλλουσ' ὑμᾶς· καὶ τοῖς ἱεροῖς

πᾶς τις ἐφ' ὑμῖν ὀρνιθευτῆς

ἴστησι βρόχους, παγίδας, ῥάβδους,

ἔρκη, νεφέλας, δίκτυα, πηκτάς·

εἶτα λαβόντες πωλοῦσ' ἄθρόους·

530 οἱ δ' ὠνοῦνται βλιμάζοντες·

κοῦ μόνον, εἶπερ ταῦτα δοκεῖ δρᾶν,

ὀπτησάμενοι παρέθενθ' ὑμᾶς,

ἀλλ' ἐπικνῶσιν τυρόν, ἔλαιον,

σίλφιον, ὄξος, καὶ τρίψαντες

535 κατὰχυσμ' ἕτερον γλυκὺ καὶ λιπαρόν,

κᾶπειτα κατεσκέδασαν θερμὸν

θερμῶν ὑμῶν

αὐτῶν, ὥσπερ κενεβρείων.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(ἀντ) πολὺ δὴ πολὺ δὴ χαλεπωτάτους λόγους

540 ἤνεγκας, ἄνθρωφ'· ὥς ἐδάκρυσά γ' ἐμῶν πατέρων

κάκην, οἱ τάσδε τὰς τιμὰς προγόνων παραδόν-
των ἐπ' ἐμοῦ κατέλυσαν.

σὺν δέ μοι κατὰ δαίμονα καὶ <τινα> συντυχίαν

545 ἀγαθὴν ἤκεις ἐμοὶ σωτήρ.

ἀναθεὶς γὰρ ἐγώ σοι

τὰ νεόττια κᾶμαντὸν οἰκετεύσω.

BIRDS

he's up to something crooked. That's how high and holy everyone deemed you then; but now you're mere knaves, simpletons, tomfools! These days they pelt you like lunatics; and even in the temples every bird hunter's out to get you, setting nooses, snares, limed twigs, toils, meshes, nets, decoys in traps. And when they've caught you they sell you wholesale, and the customers feel you up. And if they do buy you, they're not content to have you roasted and served up; no, they grate on cheese, oil, silphium, vinegar, and they whip up a second sauce, sweet and shiny, and baste it on hot, when you're hot yourselves, like meat from carcasses!

CHORUS

Very harrowing, yes very, is the tale
 you've brought us, human. It made me weep at my
 fathers'
 baseness, who in my own time have wrecked these
 privileges of mine
 that my forebears bequeathed to them.
 But now you're here, by the grace of god or some
 happy chance,
 to be my savior.
 So shall I live, entrusting to you
 my nestlings and myself.

523 δ' ἀνδράποδ', ἡλιθίους] δ' αὖ (cf. v. 611) Anon. in *Jenaische Allgem. Lit.-Zeitung* 1823 #30, col. 237

531 κοῦ μόνον Dunbar: κοῦδ' οὖν a

537 θερμῶν ὑμῶν Henderson: τοῦτο καθ' a

547 οἰκετεύσω Hermann: οἰκήσω (vel -κίσω) a: οἰκήσω δὴ t

ARISTOPHANES

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὅ τι χρὴ δρᾶν, σὺ δίδασκε παρών· ὥς ζῆν οὐκ
 ἄξιον ἡμῖν,
 εἰ μὴ κομιούμεθα παντὶ τρόπῳ τὴν ἡμετέραν
 βασιλείαν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

550 καὶ δὴ τοίνυν πρῶτα διδάσκω μίαν ὀρνίθων πόλιν
 εἶναι,
 κᾶπειτα τὸν ἀέρα πάντα κύκλῳ καὶ πᾶν τουτὶ τὸ
 μεταξὺ
 περιτειχίζειν μεγάλαις πλίνθοις ὀπταῖς ὥσπερ
 Βαβυλῶνα.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ὦ Κεβριόνη καὶ Πορφυρίων, ὥς σμερδαλέον τὸ
 πόλισμα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κᾶπειδὰν τοῦτ' ἐπανεστήκη, τὴν ἀρχὴν τὸν Δί'
 ἀπαιτεῖν·
 555 κἂν μὲν μὴ φῇ μῆδ' ἐθελήσῃ μῆδ' εὐθὺς
 γνωσιμαχήσῃ,
 ἱερὸν πόλεμον πρωυδᾶν αὐτῷ, καὶ τοῖσι θεοῖσιν
 ἀπειπεῖν
 διὰ τῆς χώρας τῆς ὑμετέρας ἐστυκόσι μὴ
 διαφοιτᾶν,
 ὥσπερ πρότερον μοιχεύσοντες τὰς Ἀλκμήνας
 κατέβαινον
 καὶ τὰς Ἀλόπας καὶ τὰς Σεμέλας· ἦνπερ δ' ἐπίωσ',
 ἐπιβάλλειν

BIRDS

CHORUS LEADER

Now it's up to you to instruct us what we should do, because our life won't be worth living unless at all costs we recover our sovereignty.

PEISETAERUS

Very well then, my first instruction is this: make a single city of birds; then encircle the whole atmosphere, all the area between earth and sky, with a wall of big baked bricks, like Babylon.

CHORUS LEADER

Cebriones and Porphyryon,⁴² what a redoubtable citadel!

PEISETAERUS

And when that's up and ready, reclaim your rulership from Zeus; and if he refuses, and isn't willing, and doesn't give up at once, declare a holy war against him, and deny the gods the right to travel through your territory with erections, the way they used to descend for adultery with their Alcmenes⁴³ and Alopes⁴⁴ and Semeles.⁴⁵ And if they do

⁴² Two of the Giants, whose rebellion against the Olympian gods was crushed in the Plain of Phlegra (cf. 824–25); *porphyryon* was also the name of a bird.

⁴³ Alcmena, Amphitryon's wife, was mother by Zeus of Heracles.

⁴⁴ Alopes, Cercyon's daughter, was mother by Poseidon of Hippothoon.

⁴⁵ Semele, Cadmus' daughter, was mother by Zeus of Dionysus.

⁵⁵³ Κεβριόνη Brunck: Κεβριόνα a

ARISTOPHANES

- 560 σφραγίδ' αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ τὴν ψωλήν, ἵνα μὴ βινῶσ' ἔτ'
ἐκείνας.
τοῖς δ' ἀνθρώποις ὄρνιν ἕτερον πέμψαι κήρυκα
κελεύω,
ὥς ὀρνίθων βασιλεπόντων θύειν ὄρνισι τὸ λοιπόν,
κᾶπειτα θεοῖς ὕστερον αὐθις· προσνείμασθαι δὲ
πρεπόντως
τοῖσι θεοῖσιν τῶν ὀρνίθων ὃς ἂν ἀρμότῃ καθ'
ἕκαστον·
565 ἦν Ἀφροδίτῃ θύῃ, κριθὰς ὄρνιθι φαληρίδι θύειν·
ἦν δὲ Ποσειδῶνί τις οἶν θύῃ, νήττῃ πυροῦς
καθαγίζειν·
ἦν δ' Ἡρακλέει θύῃ τι, λάρω ναστοῦς θύειν
μελιτοῦντας·
κἂν Διὶ θύῃ βασιλεῖ κριόν, βασιλεύς ἐστ' ὀρχίλος
ὄρνις,
ὧ̃ προτέρω δει̃ τοῦ Διὸς αὐτοῦ σέρφον ἐνόρχην
σφαγιάζειν.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

- 570 ἦσθην σέρφω σφαγιαζομένω. βροντάτω νῦν ὁ
μέγας Ζάν.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

καὶ πῶς ἡμᾶς νομιοῦσι θεοὺς ἄνθρωποι κούχῃ
κολοιούς,
οἳ πετόμεσθα πτέρυγας τ' ἔχομεν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ληρεῖς. καὶ νῆ Δί' ὃ γ' Ἑρμῆς

BIRDS

trespass, then clap a seal on their boners, so they can't fuck those women anymore. And I urge you to despatch another bird as a herald to mankind, announcing that, the birds being sovereign, they must henceforth sacrifice to the birds, and only afterwards to the gods; and that they must aptly assign to each of the gods the bird who's a fitting counterpart: if the sacrifice is to Aphrodite, sacrifice nuts to the phall-arope bird; if the sacrifice is a sheep to Poseidon, consecrate granola to the duck; if something's to be sacrificed to Heracles, sacrifice honeypies to the cormorant; and if it's a ram sacrifice to Zeus the King, the nut-hatch is a king bird,⁴⁶ and it's to him, ahead of Zeus himself, that a gnat with intact nuts must be slaughtered.

EUELPIDES

I like that, slaughtering a gnat! So let the great Zan⁴⁷ thunder away!

CHORUS LEADER

But how are humans supposed to believe we're gods and not daws? We fly around and wear wings.

PEISETAERUS

That's nonsense! Why, Hermes certainly flies around and

⁴⁶ It is unclear what bird *orchilos* refers to (perhaps the wren), and why it was a "king" bird (perhaps a reference to the wren's gold crown or to Aesop's fable [Perry 434]); the translation preserves the pun on *orcheis* "testicles."

⁴⁷ A cultic form of Zeus' name.

ARISTOPHANES

πέτεται θεὸς ὦν πτέρυγας τε φορεῖ, κάλλοι γε θεοὶ
πάνυ πολλοί.

αὐτίκα Νίκη πέτεται πτερύγοιν χρυσαῖν καὶ νῆ Δί'
Ἔρως γε·

575 Ἴριν δέ γ' Ὀμηρος ἔφασκ' ἰκέλην εἶναι τρήρωνι
πελείῃ.

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὁ Ζεὺς δ' ἡμῖν οὐ βροντήσας πέμψει πτερόεντα
κεραυνόν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἦν δ' οὖν ὑμᾶς μὲν ὑπ' ἀγνοίας εἶναι νομίσωσι τὸ
μηδέν,

τούτους δὲ θεοὺς τοὺς ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ; τότε χρὴ
στρούθων νέφος ἄρθεν

καὶ σπερμολόγων ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν τὸ σπέρμ' αὐτῶν
ἀνακάψαι·

580 κᾶπειτ' αὐτοῖς ἢ Δημήτηρ πυροὺς πεινῶσι μετρίτω.

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἐθελήσει μὰ Δί', ἀλλ' ὅψει προφάσεις αὐτὴν
παρέχουσιν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἱ δ' αὖ κόρακες τῶν ζευγαρίων, οἷσιν τὴν γῆν
καταροῦσιν,

καὶ τῶν προβάτων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐκκοψάντων ἐπὶ
πέιρα·

εἴθ' Ἀπόλλων ἰατρός <γ> ὦν ἰάσθω· μισθοφορεῖ δέ.

BIRDS

sports wings, and he's a god, and so do a great many other gods; Victory, for example, flies on golden wings, and so does Cupid, and Homer pronounced Iris to be "like to a trembling dove."⁴⁸

EUELPIDES

And won't Zeus thunder at us and hurl his "wingéd lightning bolt"?

PEISETAERUS

But if out of ignorance they still think that you're nothing and the Olympians are gods, then a cloud of sparrows and seed pickers must arise and gobble up their seed in the fields. When they're famished, let Demeter dole out grain to them!

EUELPIDES

She'll certainly renege; mark my words, she'll just make excuses.⁴⁹

PEISETAERUS

And let the ravens peck out the eyes of the oxen harnessed to plough their land, and of their sheep, as a challenge. Then let Apollo the Healer heal them—and earn his fee!

⁴⁸ *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 114.

⁴⁹ Like populist politicians, cf. *Knights* 1100–06, *Wasps* 715–18.

576 ET. Bentley: ΠΕΙΣ. PC: 'ΕΠ. cett. πέμψει] πέμπει
Anon. Parisinus saec. MDII (v. ed. Dunbar, p. 51) et Tyrwhitt

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

585 μή, πρίν γ' ἂν ἐγὼ τὸ βοιδαρίω τῷμὸν πρῶτιστ'
ἀποδῶμαι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἦν δ' ἡγῶνται σὲ θεόν, σὲ Ζῆνα, σὲ Γῆν, σὲ
Κρόνον, σὲ Ποσειδῶ,
ἀγάθ' αὐτοῖσιν πάντα παρέσται.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

λέγε δή μοι τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἔν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πρῶτα μὲν αὐτῶν τὰς οἰνάνθας οἱ πάρνοπες οὐ
κατέδονται,
ἀλλὰ γλαυκῶν λόχος εἰς αὐτοὺς καὶ κερχνηδῶν
ἐπιτρίψει.

590 εἶθ' οἱ κνῖπες καὶ ψῆνες ἀεὶ τὰς συκᾶς οὐ
κατέδονται,
ἀλλ' ἀναλέξει πάντας καθαρῶς αὐτοὺς ἀγέλη μία
κιχλῶν.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

πλουτεῖν δὲ πόθεν δώσομεν αὐτοῖς; καὶ γὰρ τούτου
σφόδρ' ἐρώσιν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὰ μέταλλ' αὐτοῖς μαντευομένοις οὔτοι δώσουσι τὰ
χρηστά,
τάς τ' ἐμπορίας τὰς κερδαλέας πρὸς τὸν μάντιν
κατερούσιν,
ὥστ' ἀπολείται τῶν ναυκλήρων οὐδεῖς.

BIRDS

EUELPIDES

No—at least not until I've sold my own little pair of oxen!

PEISETAERUS

But if they accept you as their god, you as their Zeus, you as their Earth, you as their Cronus, you as their Poseidon, then all good things will be theirs.

CHORUS LEADER

Give me an example of these good things.

PEISETAERUS

For starters, the locusts won't devour their vine blooms; a single contingent of owls and kestrels will wipe them out. Then again, the mites and the gallflies won't always be devouring their fig trees; a single flock of thrushes will eat them clean up.

CHORUS LEADER

But how will we give them wealth? Because that's a strong passion of theirs.

PEISETAERUS

When they practice augury these birds will give them the motherlodes, and to the diviner they'll reveal the profitable voyages, so that no shipowner will be lost.

⁵⁸⁶ *σε Ζῆνα* Sommerstein in *CQ* 48 (1998) 9–10 *praeuntibus* Blaydes et Dunbar: *σε βίον* a

ARISTOPHANES

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

595

πῶς οὐκ ἀπολείται;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

προερεῖ τις ἀεὶ τῶν ὀρνίθων μαντενομένῳ περὶ τοῦ
πλοῦ·

“νυνὶ μὴ πλεῖ, χειμῶν ἔσται.” “νυνὶ πλεῖ, κέρδος
ἐπέσται.”

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

γαῦλον κτῶμαι καὶ ναυκληρῶ, κοῦκ ἂν μείναιμι
παρ’ ὑμῖν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τοὺς θησαυροὺς τ’ αὐτοῖς δείξουσ’ οὓς οἱ πρότερον
κατέθεντο

600 τῶν ἀργυρίων· οὗτοι γὰρ ἴσασι· λέγουσι δέ τοι
τάδε πάντες·

“οὐδεὶς οἶδεν τὸν θησαυρὸν τὸν ἐμὸν πλήν εἴ τις
ἄρ’ ὄρνις.”

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

πωλῶ γαῦλον, κτῶμαι σμινύην, καὶ τὰς ὑδρίας
ἀνορύττω.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

πῶς δ’ ὑγίειαν δώσουσ’ αὐτοῖς, οὔσαν παρὰ τοῖσι
θεοῖσιν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἦν εὖ πράττωσ’, οὐχ ὑγεία μεγάλη τοῦτ’ ἐστί;

BIRDS

CHORUS LEADER

They won't be lost? How so?

PEISETAERUS

When he asks the diviner about his voyage, one of the birds will always tip him off: "Don't sail just now, a storm's on its way"; "Sail now, there's a profit in store."

EUELPIDES

I'm buying a merchantman and becoming a shipowner—not staying here with you guys!

PEISETAERUS

And they'll show them the hoards of silver that the old-timers buried; these birds know where they are. You do hear everyone say, "None but some bird knows where *my* treasure lies."

EUELPIDES

I'm selling that merchantman, getting a shovel, and digging up pots!

CHORUS LEADER

But how will the birds give them health? That rests with the gods.

PEISETAERUS

If they're wealthy, they're plenty healthy, no?

599 *πρότερον*] *πρότεροι* V^{pc} M A t

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

σάφ' ἴσθι,

605 ὥς ἄνθρωπός γε κακῶς πράττων ἀτεχνῶς οὐδεὶς
ὑγιαίνει.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

πῶς δ' εἰς γῆράς ποτ' ἀφίξονται; καὶ γὰρ τοῦτ' ἔστ'
ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ.

ἢ παιδάρι' ὄντ' ἀποθνήσκειν δεῖ;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μὰ Δί' ἀλλὰ τριακόσι' αὐτοῖς
ἔτι προσθήσουσ' ὄρνιθες ἔτη.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

παρὰ τοῦ;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

παρὰ τοῦ; παρ' ἑαυτῶν.
οὐκ οἶσθ' ὅτι πέντ' ἀνδρῶν γενεὰς ζῶει λακέρυζα
κορώνη;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

610 αἰβοῖ, πολλῶ κρείττους οὗτοι τοῦ Διὸς ἡμῖν
βασιλεύειν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ γὰρ πολλῶ;
πρῶτον μὲν <γ'> οὐχὶ νεὼς ἡμᾶς
οἰκοδομεῖν δεῖ λιθίνους αὐτοῖς,
οὐδὲ θυρῶσαι χρυσαῖσι θύραις,
615 ἀλλ' ὑπὸ θάμνοισι καὶ πρινιδίοις

BIRDS

EUELPIDES

You know it! No human's healthy at all if he's doing poorly.

CHORUS LEADER

But how will they reach old age? That's also up to Olympus.
Or are they to die when they're tykes?

PEISETAERUS

Heavens no, the birds will add an extra three hundred years to their lives.

CHORUS LEADER

Where from?

PEISETAERUS

Where? From themselves: don't you know that "five ages of man lives the croaking crow"?⁵⁰

EUELPIDES

Dammit, these birds are far better kings for us than Zeus!

PEISETAERUS

Far better for sure! To begin with, we needn't build them marble temples and gild the gates with gold; they'll make their homes in copses and woods, while for the bird VIPs

⁵⁰ Cf. Hesiod, fr. 304.

⁶¹¹ lacunam unius metri suspiceres (cf. v. 523), suppl. e.g. <κρείττους, πολλῶ> Blaydes

ARISTOPHANES

οἰκήσουσιν. τοῖς δ' αὖ σεμνοῖς
 τῶν ὀρνίθων δένδρον ἐλαίας
 ὁ νεὼς ἔσται. κούκ εἰς Δελφοὺς
 οὐδ' εἰς Ἄμμων' ἐλθόντες ἐκεῖ
 620 θύσομεν, ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖσιν κομάροις
 καὶ τοῖς κοτῖνοις στάντες, ἔχοντες
 κριθάς, πυροὺς εὐξόμεθ' αὐτοῖς
 ἀνατείνοντες τὸ χεῖρ' ἀγαθῶν
 διδόναι τὸ μέρος· καὶ ταῦθ' ἡμῖν
 625 παραχρῆμ' ἔσται
 πυροὺς ὀλίγους προβαλοῦσιν.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ὦ φίλτατ' ἐμοὶ πολὺν πρεσβυτῶν ἐξ ἐχθίστου
 μεταπίπτων,
 οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως ἂν ἐγὼ ποθ' ἐκὼν τῆς σῆς γνώμης
 ἔτ' ἀφείμην.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἐπαυχήσας δὲ τοῖσι σοῖς λόγοις
 630 ἐπηπείλησα καὶ κατώμοσα,
 εἰς τὸν παρ' ἐμὲ θέμενος ὁμόφρονας λόγους
 δίκαιος ἄδολος ὅσιος ἐπὶ θεοὺς ἵης,
 ἐμοὶ φρονῶν ξυνωδά, μὴ πολὺν χρόνον
 635 θεοὺς ἔτι σκῆπτρα τὰμὰ τρίψειν.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὅσα μὲν δεῖ ρώμῃ πράττειν, ἐπὶ ταῦτα
 τεταξόμεθ' ἡμεῖς·

BIRDS

an olive tree will be their temple. And we'll not be going to Delphi or Ammon⁵¹ and sacrificing there; instead we'll stand among strawberries and wild olives holding grains of barley and wheat in our outstretched hands, and pray to the birds to give us a share of blessings; and we'll get these blessings right away, just for tossing them a few grains of wheat!

CHORUS LEADER

Old man, my worst enemy changed into my very best friend, it's impossible that I could ever choose to discard this idea of yours!

CHORUS

Emboldened by your words,
I give notice and solemnly swear:
if you bring to my cause congenial proposals,
and fairly, squarely, righteously attack the gods,
tuning your thoughts to mine, then not much longer
will the gods be abusing my sceptre!

CHORUS LEADER

So in the tasks that call for brawn, we're ready for duty; in

⁵¹ A ram-headed Egyptian god, identified by the Greeks with Zeus, who had an oracular shrine at the Siwa oasis in Libya.

⁶³² δίκαιος ἄδολος ὅσιος Bergk: δικαίους ἀδόλους ὀσίους a

ARISTOPHANES

ὅσα δὲ γνώμη δεῖ βουλεύειν, ἐπὶ σοὶ τάδε πάντ'
ἀνάκειται.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ μὴν μὰ τὸν Δί' οὐχὶ νυστάζειν ἔτι
ᾧρα ὅστιν ἡμῖν οὐδὲ μελλονικιᾶν,
640 ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστα δεῖ τι δρᾶν.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

πρῶτον δέ γε
εἰσέλθετ' εἰς νεοττιάν τε τὴν ἐμὴν
καὶ τὰμὰ κάρφη καὶ τὰ παρόντα φρύγανα,
καὶ τοῦνομ' ἡμῖν φράσατον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλὰ ῥάδιον.
ἐμοὶ μὲν ὄνομα Πεισέταιρος, τῷδεδὶ
Εὐελπίδης Κριῶθεν.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

645 ἀλλὰ χαίρετον
ἄμφω.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

δεχόμεθα.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

δεῦρο τοίνυν εἴσιτον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἴωμεν· εἰσηγοῦ σὺ λαβὼν ἡμᾶς.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἴθι.

BIRDS

the plans that call for brains, you're in charge of all that.

PEISETAERUS

Well then, there's absolutely no time left for napping or a spell of Nicias' Paralysis;⁵² no, we've got to accomplish something, and fast!

TEREUS

Yes, but first come inside, into my nest, my sticks and such twigs as I have, and both of you tell us your names.

PEISETAERUS

That's easy enough: my name is Peisetaerus, and this one here is Euelpides of Crioia.⁵³

TEREUS

A hearty welcome to you both.

PEISETAERUS

Thank you.

TEREUS

Well then, do come in, right this way.

PEISETAERUS

(*to Euelpides*) Let's go in. (*to Tereus*) Please, show us in.

TEREUS

Come on!

⁵² Nicias had urged caution in sending the armada against Sicily (Thucydides 6.8, 25) and then had failed to follow up his victory before Syracuse (6.71, cf. Plutarch, *Life of Nicias* 16.8–9).

⁵³ For the significance of the names see 1–2 nn. Crioia and the variant Thria were actual Attic demes, but the comic point is unclear.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀτάρ, τὸ δεῖνα, δεῦρ' ἐπανάκρουσαι πάλιν.
φέρ' ἴδω, φράσον νῶν, πῶς ἐγώ τε χούτοσὶ
650 ξυνεσόμεθ' ὑμῖν πετομένοις οὐ πετομένω;

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

καλῶς.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄρα νυν, ὥς ἐν Αἰσώπου λόγοις
ἐστὶν λεγόμενον δὴ τι, τὴν ἀλώπεχ', ὥς
φλαύρως ἐκοινώνησεν αἰετῷ ποτε.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

μηδὲν φοβηθῆς· ἔστι γάρ τι ρίζιον,
655 ὃ διατραγόντ' ἔσεσθον ἐπτερωμένω.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔτω μὲν εἰσίωμεν. ἄγε δὴ, Ξανθία
καὶ Μανόδωρε, λαμβάνετε τὰ στρώματα.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

οὔτος, σὲ καλῶ, σὲ λέγω.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

τί καλεῖς;

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

τούτους μὲν ἄγων μετὰ σαυτοῦ
ἀρίστισον εὔ· τὴν δ' ἡδυμελῆ ξύμφωνον ἀηδόνα
Μούσαις
660 κατάλειψ' ἡμῖν δεῦρ' ἐκβιβάσας, ἵνα παίσωμεν μετ'
ἐκείνης.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

But, um, hold on, reverse oars, back this way! Look here, tell us, how can I and my pal here be your partners when you all can fly and we can't?

TEREUS

Just fine.

PEISETAERUS

Mind you now, there's a story in Aesop's fables about the fox, how once upon a time she fared poorly in partnership with an eagle.⁵⁴

TEREUS

Never fear, there's a certain little root; chew it and you'll have wings.

PEISETAERUS

It's a deal; let's go inside. (*to the Slaves*) Come on then, Xanthias and Manodorus, pick up the baggage.

CHORUS LEADER

(*to Tereus*) Yoo hoo! Yes you. A word, please.

TEREUS

What is it?

CHORUS LEADER

Do take these men with you and give them a good lunch; but that mellifluous nightingale, singer in the Muses' choir, bring her out here and leave her with us; we'd like to play with her.

⁵⁴ Aesop 1 Perry, first attested in Archilochus, frags. 172–81 West. The eagle had betrayed the fox by feeding her cubs to its eaglets, and the flightless fox could only curse the eagle; but when the eagle took hot goat-meat from an altar she set her nest afire, and the fox ate the eaglets as they fell.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ τοῦτο μέντοι νῆ Δί' αὐτοῖσιν πιθοῦ.
ἐκβίβασον ἐκ τοῦ βουτόμου τούρνιθιον·

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐκβίβασον αὐτοῦ, πρὸς θεῶν, αὐτήν, ἵνα
καὶ νὼ θεασώμεσθα τὴν ἀηδόνα.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

665 ἀλλ' εἰ δοκεῖ σφῶν, ταῦτα χρὴ δρᾶν. ἡ Πρόκνη,
ἔκβαινε καὶ σαυτήν ἐπιδείκνυ τοῖς ξένοις.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ Ζεῦ πολυτίμηθ', ὥς καλὸν τούρνιθιον·
ὥς δ' ἀπαλόν, ὥς δὲ λευκόν.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἄρά γ' οἶσθ' ὅτι
ἐγὼ διαμηρίζοιμ' ἂν αὐτήν ἡδέως;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

670 ὅσον δ' ἔχει τὸν χρυσόν, ὥσπερ παρθένος.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐγὼ μὲν αὐτήν καὶ φιλήσαί μοι δοκῶ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ', ὦ κακόδαιμον, ρύγχος ὀβελίσκοιν ἔχει.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ῥὸν νῆ Δί' ἀπολέψαντα χρὴ
ἀπὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς τὸ λέμμα κᾶθ' οὕτω φιλεῖν.

ΤΗΡΕΤΣ

ἴωμεν.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Oh yes, by all means do as they ask! Bring the chick out of the tickle grass.

EUELPIDES

Heavens yes, do bring her out; we want to have a look at the nightingale too.

TEREUS

Well, if that's what you both want, I must oblige. Oh, Procne! Come outside and present yourself to our guests.

Enter Procne, costumed as a girl piper with wings and a bird's head.

PEISETAERUS

God almighty, what a beautiful chick! So tender and fair!

EUELPIDES

Know what? I'd be glad to spread those drumsticks!

PEISETAERUS

She's got quite a choker, like a debutante!

EUELPIDES

Me, I think I'd also like to give her a kiss.

PEISETAERUS

Look, you screw-up, she's got a couple of skewers for a beak!

EUELPIDES

OK, it's like an egg: we'll just have to peel that shell off her head and kiss her that way!

TEREUS

Let's go inside!

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

675 ἡγοῦ δὴ σὺ νῶν τύχ' ἀγαθῇ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὦ φίλη, ὦ ξουθή,
 ὦ φίλτατον ὀρνέων,
 πάντων ξύννομε τῶν ἐμῶν
 ὕμνων, ξύντροφ' ἀηδοῖ,
 680 ἦλθες ἦλθες ὥφθης,
 ἡδὺν φθόγγον ἐμοὶ φέρουσ'.
 ἀλλ', ὦ καλλιβόαν κρέκους,
 αὐλὸν φθέγμασιν ἡρινοῖς,
 ἄρχου τῶν ἀναπαίστων.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

685 ἄγε δὴ φύσιν ἄνδρες ἀμαυρόβιοι, φύλλων γενεᾷ
 προσόμοιοι,
 ὀλιγοδρανέες, πλάσματα πηλοῦ, σκιοειδέα φύλ'
 ἀμενηνά,
 ἀπτῆνες ἐφημέριοι, ταλαοὶ βροτοί, ἀνέρες
 εἰκελόνειροι,
 προσέχετε τὸν νοῦν τοῖς ἀθανάτοις ἡμῖν, τοῖς αἰὲν
 ἐοῦσιν,
 τοῖς αἰθερίοις, τοῖσιν ἀγήρως, τοῖς ἄφθιτα
 μηδομένοισιν,
 690 ἵν' ἀκούσαντες πάντα παρ' ἡμῶν ὀρθῶς περὶ τῶν
 μετεώρων,
 φύσιν οἰωνῶν γένεσίν τε θεῶν ποταμῶν τ' Ἑρέβους
 τε Χάους τε

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

After you, then, and good luck to us!

All except Procne and the Chorus exit into Tereus' nest.

CHORUS

Ah darling warbler,
ah, dearest of birds,
songmate of all my hymns,
my nightingale companion,
you're here, you're here, you're manifest,
bringing sweet sound to me.
Now, weaver of springtime tunes
on the fair-toned pipes,
lead off our anapests.

CHORUS LEADER

Now then, ye men by nature just faintly alive, like to the race of leaves, do-littles, artefacts of clay, tribes shadowy and feeble, wingless ephemerals, suffering mortals, dreamlike people: pay attention to us, the immortals, the everlasting, the etherial, the ageless, whose counsels are imperishable; once you hear from us an accurate account of all celestial phenomena, and know correctly the nature of birds and the genesis of gods, rivers, Erebus, and Chaos,

εἰδότες ὀρθῶς, Προδίκῳ παρ' ἐμοῦ κλάειν εἵπητε τὸ
λοιπόν.

Χάος ἦν καὶ Νύξ Ἑρεβός τε μέλαν πρῶτον καὶ
Τάρταρος εὐρύς·

Γῇ δ' οὐδ' Ἀἷρ οὐδ' Οὐρανὸς ἦν· Ἑρέβους δ' ἐν
ἀπείροσι κόλποις

695 τίκτει πρῶτιστον ὑπηγέμιον Νύξ ἡ μελανόπτερος
ῥόν,

ἐξ οὗ περιτελλομέναις ὥραις ἔβλασται Ἑρως ὁ
ποθεινός,

στίλβων νῶτον περύγοιεν χρυσαῖν, εἰκὼς ἀνεμώκεσι
δίταις.

οὗτος δὲ Χάει πετερόεντι μιγείς νύχιος κατὰ
Τάρταρον εὐρὺν

ἐνεόττεινσεν γένος ἡμέτερον, καὶ πρῶτον ἀνήγαγεν
εἰς φῶς.

700 πρότερον δ' οὐκ ἦν γένος ἀθανάτων, πρὶν Ἑρως
ξυνέμειξεν ἅπαντα·

ξυμμειγνυμένων δ' ἐτέρων ἐτέροις γένετ' Οὐρανὸς
Ὠκεανός τε

καὶ Γῇ πάντων τε θεῶν μακάρων γένος ἀφθιτον.
ᾧδε μὲν ἐσμεν

πολὺν πρεσβύτατοι πάντων μακάρων ἡμεῖς. ὥς δ'
ἐσμὲν Ἑρως

πολλοῖς δῆλον· πετόμεσθά <τε> γὰρ καὶ τοῖσιν
ἐρώσι σύνεσμεν·

705 πολλοὺς δὲ καλοὺς ἀπομωμοκότας παῖδας πρὸς
τέρμασιν ὥρας

BIRDS

thenceforth you'll be able to tell Prodicus from me to go to hell! ⁵⁵

In the beginning were Chaos and Night and black Erebus and broad Tartarus, and no Earth, Air, or Sky. And in the boundless bosom of Erebus did black-winged Night at the very start bring forth a wind egg, from which as the seasons revolved came forth Eros the seductive, like to swift whirlwinds, his back aglitter with wings of gold. And mating by night with winged Chaos in broad Tartarus, he hatched our own race and first brought it up to daylight. There was no race of immortal gods before Eros commingled everything; then as this commingled with that, Sky came to be, and Ocean and Earth, and the whole imperishable race of blessed gods. Thus we're far older than all the blessed gods, and it's abundantly clear that we're the offspring of Eros: we fly, and we keep company with lovers. Many are the fair boys who swore they wouldn't, and al-

⁵⁵ Prodicus of Ceos, a contemporary of Socrates with broad scientific and philosophical interests, traced the origin of gods to primitive nature- and hero-worship.

⁶⁹⁸ *νύχιος* Halbertsma: *νυχίω* vel *νυχίων* a S: *μύχιος* West

διὰ τὴν ἰσχὺν τὴν ἡμετέραν διεμήρισαν ἄνδρες
 ἔρασταί,
 ὁ μὲν ὄρτυγα δούς, ὁ δὲ πορφυρίων', ὁ δὲ χῆν', ὁ δὲ
 Περσικὸν ὄρνιν.

πάντα δὲ θνητοῖς ἐστὶν ἀφ' ἡμῶν τῶν ὀρνίθων τὰ
 μέγιστα.

πρῶτα μὲν ὥρας φαίνομεν ἡμεῖς ἥρος, χειμῶνος,
 ὁπώρας·

710 σπείρειν μὲν, ὅταν γέρανος κρώζουσ' εἰς τὴν
 Λιβύην μεταχωρῇ·

καὶ πηδάλιον τότε ναυκλήρῳ φράζει κρεμάσαντι
 καθεύδειν,

εἶτα δ' Ὀρέστη χλαῖναν ὑφαίνειν, ἵνα μὴ ῥιγῶν
 ἀποδύῃ.

ἰκτῖνος δ' αὖ μετὰ ταῦτα φανείς ἐτέραν ὥραν
 ἀποφαίνει,

ἡνίκα πεκτεῖν ὥρα προβάτων πόκον ἡρινόν· εἶτα
 χελιδών,

715 ὅτε χρὴ χλαῖναν πωλεῖν ἤδη καὶ ληδάριον τι
 πρίασθαι.

ἐσμέν δ' ὑμῖν Ἄμμων, Δελφοί, Δωδώνη, Φοῖβος
 Ἀπόλλων.

ἐλθόντες γὰρ πρῶτον ἐπ' ὄρνις οὕτω πρὸς ἅπαντα
 τρέπεσθε,

πρὸς τ' ἐμπορίαν, καὶ πρὸς βιότου κτήσιν, καὶ πρὸς
 γάμον ἀνδρός.

ὄρνιν τε νομίζετε πάνθ' ὅσαπερ περὶ μαντείας
 διακρίνει·

BIRDS

most made it to the end of their eligible bloom, but thanks to our power men in love did get between their thighs, one with the gift of a quail, another with a porphyryon, a goose, or a Persian bird. And mortals get all their greatest blessings from us birds. To start with, we reveal the seasons of spring, winter, and autumn. It's time to sow when the crane whoops off to Africa; that's when it tells the shipowner to hang up his rudder and go to sleep, and Orestes⁵⁶ to weave a cloak so he won't be cold when he's out mugging people. And then it's the kite's turn to appear and reveal another season, when it's time to shear the sheep's spring wool. And then there's the swallow when you should be selling your coat and buying a jacket. And we're your Ammon,⁵⁷ your Delphi, your Dodona,⁵⁸ your Phoebus Apollo, for you don't embark on any course without first consulting the birds—about business, about acquiring a livelihood, about a man's getting married. Whatever's decisive in prophecy you deem a bird: to you, an ominous utterance is a bird, a

⁵⁶ The nickname of the son of one Timocrates (schol. *Birds* 1487), after the mythical hero who wandered insane to Athens after killing his own mother.

⁵⁷ See 619 n.

⁵⁸ In Epirus, in NW Greece, where Zeus had an oracle.

ARISTOPHANES

- 720 φήμη γ' ὑμῖν ὄρνις ἐστί, πταρμόν τ' ὄρνιθα
καλεῖτε,
ξύμβολον ὄρνιν, φωνήν ὄρνιν, θεράποντ' ὄρνιν, ὄνον
ὄρνιν.
ἄρ' οὐ φανερώς ἡμεῖς ὑμῖν ἐσμὲν μαντεῖος
Ἀπόλλων;
ἦν οὖν ἡμᾶς νομίσητε θεούς,
ἔξετε χρῆσθαι μάντεσι, μούσαις,
725 αὔραις, ὥραις, χειμῶνι, θέρει
μετρίῳ, πνίγει· κούκ ἀποδράντες
καθεδούμεθ' ἄνω σεμνυνόμενοι
παρὰ ταῖς νεφέλαις ὥσπερ χῶ Ζεὺς·
ἀλλὰ παρόντες δώσομεν ὑμῖν
730 αὐτοῖς, παισίν, παίδων παισίν,
πλουθυγίειαν, βίον, εἰρήνην,
νεότητα, γέλωτα, χορούς, θαλίας
γάλα τ' ὀρνίθων. ὥστε παρέσται
735 κοπιᾶν ὑμῖν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγαθῶν·
οὔτω πλουτήσετε πάντες.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

- (στρ) Μοῦσα λοχμαία,
τιοτιοτιοτιοτίγξ,
ποικίλη, μεθ' ἧς ἐγὼ νά-
740 παισί <τε καὶ> κορυφαῖς ἐν ὀρείαις,
τιοτιοτιοτιοτίγξ,
ἰζόμενος μελίας ἔπι φυλλοκόμον,
τιοτιοτιοτιοτίγξ,

BIRDS

sneeze you call a bird, a chance meeting's a bird, a sound's a bird, a good-luck servant's a bird, a braying donkey's a bird. So aren't we obviously your prophetic Apollo? Well then, if you treat us as gods you'll have the benefit of prophets, muses, breezes, seasons—winter, mild summer, stifling heat. And we won't run off and sit up there preening among the clouds, like Zeus, but ever at hand we'll bestow on you, your children, and your children's children healthy wealthiness, happiness, prosperity, peace, youth, hilarity, dances, festivities, and birds' milk. Why, you're liable to knock yourself out from good living, that's how rich you'll all be!

CHORUS

Bosky Muse—
tio tio tio tio tinx!—
of intricate tone, joining you
mid the vales and mountain peaks—
tio tio tio tio tinx!—
perched on a leaf-tressed ash—
tio tio tio tio tinx!—

ARISTOPHANES

δι' ἐμῆς γέννος ξουθῆς μελέων
 745 Πανὶ νόμους ἱεροὺς ἀναφαίνω
 σεμνά τε Μητρὶ χορεύματ' Ὀρεία,
 τοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτίγξ,
 ἔνθεν ὥσπερεὶ μέλιττα
 Φρύνιχος ἀμβροσίων μελέων ἀπε-
 750 βόσκετο καρπὸν ἀεὶ
 φέρων γλυκεῖαν ὥδάν,
 τιοτιοτιοτιοτίγξ.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

εἰ μετ' ὀρνίθων τις ὑμῶν, ὦ θεαταί, βούλεται
 διαπλέκειν ζῶν ἡδέως τὸ λοιπόν, ὥς ἡμᾶς ἴτω.
 755 ὅσα γὰρ ἐνθάδ' ἐστὶν αἰσχροὶ τοῖς νόμῳ
 κρατουμένοις,
 ταῦτα πάντ' ἐστὶν παρ' ἡμῖν τοῖσιν ὄρνισιν καλά.
 εἰ γὰρ ἐνθάδ' ἐστὶν αἰσχροὺς τὸν πατέρα τύπτειν
 νόμῳ,
 τοῦτ' ἐκεῖ καλὸν παρ' ἡμῖν ἐστίν, ἣν τις τῷ πατρὶ
 προσδραμὼν εἶπη πατάξας· “αἶρε πλήκτρον, εἰ
 μαχεῖ.”
 760 εἰ δὲ τυγχάνει τις ὑμῶν δραπετῆς ἐστιγμένος,
 ἀτταγᾶς οὗτος παρ' ἡμῖν ποικίλος κεκλήσεται.
 εἰ δὲ τυγχάνει τις ὢν Φρυγὴ μηδὲν ἦττον Σπινθάρου,
 φρυγίλος ὄρνις ἐνθάδ' ἔσται τοῦ Φιλήμονος γένους.
 εἰ δὲ δοῦλός ἐστι καὶ Κὰρ ὥσπερ Ἐξηκεστίδης,

755 τοῖς νόμῳ κρατουμένοις Henderson praeunte van
 Leeuwen: τῷ νόμῳ κρατούμενα a

BIRDS

from my vibrant throat I pour forth
sacred strains of song for Pan
and holy dance tunes for the Mountain Mother⁵⁹—
to to to to to to to to to tinx!—
whence like a bee
Phrynichus⁶⁰ ever sipped the nectar
of ambrosial music
to bring forth his sweet song—
tio tio tio tio tinx!

CHORUS LEADER

Spectators, if any of you wants to sew up the rest of his life pleasantly with the birds, come to us. Because all things shameful here, for people controlled by custom, are admirable among us birds. Say by custom it's shameful here to hit your father; up there it's admirable for someone to rush his father, hit him, and say "Put up your spur if you mean to fight!" And if you happen to be a runaway slave with a branded forehead, with us you'll be called a dappled francolin; if you happen to be no less a Phrygian than Spintharus,⁶¹ up there you'll be a pigeon of Philemon's⁶² breed; if you're a slave and a Carian like Excecestides, join

⁵⁹ Cybele, the Anatolian mother goddess; both she and Pan were worshipped at Athens.

⁶⁰ The songs of this tragic poet, an older contemporary of Aeschylus, were still popular among the older generation, cf. *Wasps* 220, 268–69, 1490.

⁶¹ Phrygians at Athens would be slaves; the Spintharus teased here for foreign ancestry may be the father of the fourth-century statesman Eubulus.

⁶² Unknown.

ARISTOPHANES

765 φυσάτω πάππους παρ' ἡμῖν, καὶ φανοῦνται
φράτερες.
εἰ δ' ὁ Πεισίου προδοῦναι τοῖς ἀτίμοις τὰς πύλας
βούλεται, πέρδιξ γενέσθω, τοῦ πατρὸς νεόττιον·
ὥς παρ' ἡμῖν οὐδὲν αἰσχρόν ἐστιν ἐκπερδικίσαι.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(ἀντ.) τοιάδε κύκνοι,
770 τιοτιοτιοτιοτίγξ,
συμμιγῇ βοὴν ὁμοῦ πε-
ροῖσι κρέκοντες ἴαχον Ἀπόλλω,
τιοτιοτιοτιοτίγξ,
ὄχθω ἐφεζόμενοι παρ' Ἑβρον ποταμόν,
775 τιοτιοτιοτιοτίγξ,
διὰ δ' αἰθέριον νέφος ἦλθε βοά·
πτῆξε δὲ φύλά τε ποικίλα θηρῶν,
κύματά τ' ἔσβεσε νήνεμος αἶθρη,
τοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτίγξ·
780 πᾶς δ' ἐπεκτύπησ' Ὀλυμπος·
εἶλε δὲ θάμβος ἄνακτας Ὀλυμπιά-
δες δὲ μέλος Χάριτες
Μοῦσαι τ' ἐπωλόλυξαν,
τιοτιοτιοτιοτίγξ.

766 Πεισ- Daubuz: Πισ- a

BIRDS

us and generate some forefeathers, and proper kinfolk will materialize; and if Peisias' son wants to betray the gates to the outlaws, let him become a partridge, a chick of the old cock, since among us there's nothing shameful in playing partridge tricks.⁶³

CHORUS⁶⁴

Just so did swans—
tio tio tio tio tinx!—
beating wings in unison
raise a harmonious whoop for Apollo—
tio tio tio tio tinx!—
gathered on the bank by Hebrus River—
tio tio tio tio tinx!
their whooping pierced the cloud of heaven;
the manifold tribes of beasts were cowed,
and the cloudless clear air quenched the waves—
to to to to to to to to tinx!—
All Olympus reverberated,
amazement seized its lords, and the Olympian
Graces and Muses
replied in cheerful song—
tio tio tio tio tinx!

⁶³ Peisias' son was perhaps the Cleombrotus called "son of Partridge" (cf. 1292–93) in Phrynichus com. fr. 55; "the outlaws" are probably those denounced in the sacrileges of 415 who had fled Athens and were condemned *in absentia*; "tricks" refers to the partridge's skill at evading pursuers.

⁶⁴ Probably recollecting Apollo's journey from the Hyperboreans to Delphi in a swan-drawn chariot, which Alcaeus had described in a famous paean (fr. 307).

ARISTOPHANES

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

- 785 οὐδέν ἐστ' ἄμεινον οὐδ' ἥδιον ἢ φῦσαι πτερὰ.
 αὐτίχ' ὑμῶν τῶν θεατῶν εἴ τις ἦν ὑπόπτερος,
 εἶτα πεινῶν τοῖς χοροῖσι τῶν τραγωδῶν ἤχθετο,
 ἐκπτόμενος ἂν οὗτος ἡρίστησεν ἐλθὼν οἴκαδε,
 κᾶτ' ἂν ἐμπλησθεὶς ἐφ' ἡμᾶς αὖθις αὖ κατέπτατο.
- 790 εἴ τε Πατροκλείδης τις ὑμῶν τυγχάνει χεζητιῶν,
 οὐκ ἂν ἐξίδισεν εἰς θοῖμάτιον, ἀλλ' ἀνέπτατο,
 κάποπαρδὼν κάναπνεύσας αὖθις αὖ κατέπτατο.
 εἴ τε μοιχεύων τις ὑμῶν ἐστίν ὅστις τυγχάνει,
 κᾶθ' ὁρᾷ τὸν ἄνδρα τῆς γυναικὸς ἐν βουλευτικῷ,
- 795 οὗτος ἂν πάλιν παρ' ὑμῶν πτερυγίσας ἀνέπτατο,
 εἶτα βινήσας ἐκείθεν αὖθις αὖ κατέπτατο.
 ἄρ' ὑπόπτερον γενέσθαι παντός ἐστιν ἄξιον;
 ὥς Διειτρέφης γε πυτιναῖα μόνον ἔχων πτερὰ
 ἡρέθη φύλαρχος, εἶθ' ἵππαρχος, εἶτ' ἐξ οὐδενὸς
- 800 μεγάλα πράττει καστὶ νυνὶ ξουθὸς ἵππαλεκτρυνών.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ταυτὶ τοιαυτί. μὰ Δί' ἐγὼ μὲν πρᾶγμά πω
 γελοιότερον οὐκ εἶδον οὐδεπώποτε.

⁷⁹⁶ κατέπτατο S: καθέζετο a

⁶⁵ Two decrees survive whose proposer(s) bore this name: IG i³ 63 (420) and Andocides 1.73–80 (405); our man was nicknamed “The Shitter,” according to the scholiast.

⁶⁶ The 500 members of the Council had a block of reserved seats at the front, cf. *Peace* 887, 906.

⁶⁷ Despite his comic caricature as a distasteful arriviste (cf.

BIRDS

CHORUS LEADER

There's nothing better or merrier than sprouting wings. Say one of you spectators had wings, and got hungry, and grew bored with the tragic performances; then he'd have flown out of here, gone home, had lunch, and when he was full, flown back here to see us. And supposing some Patrocleides⁶⁵ in the audience needed to shit, he wouldn't have soaked his cloak; no, he'd have flown off, blown a fart, caught his breath, and flown back here again. And if there's anyone among you who happens to be an adulterer, and sees the lady's husband in the Councillors' seats,⁶⁶ he'd have used his wings to launch himself out of the audience, gone and fucked her, and then flown back here again. So isn't getting wings worth any price? Take Dieitrephes:⁶⁷ equipped only with the wings from chianti bottles,⁶⁸ he was elected tribal commander, then cavalry commander, till now, having started from nothing, he's flying high, an actual zooming horsecock.⁶⁹

Enter PEISETAERUS and EUELPIDES, now winged.

PEISETAERUS

Ta da, here we are! God, I've never seen a funnier sight.

also Cratinus fr. 251, Plato Com. fr. 31), Dieitrephes' family was in fact distinguished. In his current generalship he would command the Thracians responsible for the massacre at Mycalessus (Thucydides 7.29–30), and later he became an oligarch (8.64).

⁶⁸ As the wicker handles were called. ⁶⁹ A mythical winged beast with the front end of a horse and the rear end of a cock, often depicted by Attic painters of the sixth and early fifth centuries and mentioned by Aeschylus in *Myrmidons* fr. 134 (cf. *Frogs* 933); used of strutting officers also in *Peace* 1177.

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐπὶ τῷ γελᾶς;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐπὶ τοῖσι σοῖς ὠκνυτέροις.

οἶσθ' ὧ μάλιστ' ἔοικας ἐπτερωμένος;

805 εἰς εὐτέλειαν χηνὶ συγγεγραμμένῳ.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

σὺ δὲ κοψίχῳ γε σκάφιον ἀποτετιλμένῳ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ταυτὶ μὲν ἡκάσμεσθα κατὰ τὸν Αἰσχύλον·

“τάδ' οὐχ ὑπ' ἄλλων, ἀλλὰ τοῖς αὐτῶν πτεροῖς.”

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ἄγε δὴ τί χρὴ δρᾶν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πρῶτον ὄνομα τῇ πόλει

810 θέσθαι τι μέγα καὶ κλεινόν, εἶτα τοῖς θεοῖς
θῦσαι μετὰ τοῦτο.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ταῦτα κάμοι συνδοκεῖ.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

φέρ' ἴδω, τί δ' ἡμῖν ὄνομ' ἄρ' ἔσται τῇ πόλει;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

βούλεσθε τὸ μέγα τοῦτο τοῦκ Λακεδαίμονος
Σπάρτην ὄνομα καλῶμεν αὐτήν;

BIRDS

EUELPIDES

What are you laughing at?

PEISETAERUS

Those wing feathers of yours. Know what you look just like in those wings? A painted goose, done cheaply!

EUELPIDES

And you look like a blackbird with a bowl cut!

PEISETAERUS

To quote Aeschylus, we're stuck with these comparisons "not by others but by our own feathers."⁷⁰

CHORUS LEADER

All right, what's on the agenda?

PEISETAERUS

First, we should give our city a name, something grand and notable; and then sacrifice to the gods.

EUELPIDES

My sentiments exactly.

CHORUS LEADER

Let's see then, what name will our city have?

PEISETAERUS

How about giving it that great Lacedaemonian name—Sparta?

⁷⁰ *Myrmidons* fr. 139, where Achilles, blaming himself for Patroclus' death, recalls an eagle shot by an arrow fletched with eagle feathers.

ARISTOPHANES

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

Ἡράκλεις·

815 Σπάρτην γὰρ ἂν θείμην ἐγὼ τήμῃ πόλει;
οὐδ' ἂν χαμεύνη πάνυ γε κειρίαν γ' ἔχων.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δῆτ' ὄνομ' αὐτῇ θησόμεσθ'·

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ἐντευθενὶ

ἐκ τῶν νεφελῶν καὶ τῶν μετεώρων χωρίων
χαῦνόν τι πάνυ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

βούλει Νεφελοκοκκυγίαν;

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

820 ἰοὺ ἰού·
καλόν γ' ἀτεχνῶς <σὺ> καὶ μέγ' ἡῦρες τοῦνομα.

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἂρ' ἐστὶν αὕτη γ' ἢ Νεφελοκοκκυγία,
ἵνα καὶ τὰ Θεογένους τὰ πολλὰ χρήματα
τά τ' Αἰσχίνου 'σθ' ἅπαντα;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ λῶον μὲν οὖν·

825 τὸ Φλέγρας πεδίου, ἵν' οἱ θεοὶ τοὺς γηγενεῖς
ἀλαζονευόμενοι καθυπερηκόντισαν.

822 Θεο- Dindorf: Θεα- a

823 λῶον Bentley cl. Σ: λῶστον a

BIRDS

EUELPIDES

Great Heracles, do you think I'd stick *my* city with the name Sparta? I wouldn't even use esparto twine for a mattress—if I had nice wide slats instead.

PEISETAERUS

Then what name *will* we give it?

CHORUS LEADER

A name suggesting all this, the clouds and the aerial spaces; something very highfalutin.

PEISETAERUS

How about Cloudcuckooland?

CHORUS LEADER

Yes, yes! You've found an absolutely great and wonderful name!

EUELPIDES

Sure, this must be the same Cloudcuckooland where most of Theogenes'⁷¹ assets are, and all of Aeschines'.⁷²

PEISETAERUS

No, even better than that: it's the Plain of Phlegra, where the Gods outshot the Earthborn at bragging!⁷³

⁷¹ A common name, here perhaps the Theogenes ridiculed for imaginary wealth in Eupolis' *Demes* fr. 99.5, 9, cf. fr. 135.

⁷² Ridiculed as a boaster also in *Wasps* 459, 1243.

⁷³ See 553 n.

ARISTOPHANES

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

λιπαρὸν τὸ χρῆμα τῆς πόλεως. τίς δαὶ θεὸς
πολιοῦχος ἔσται; τῷ ξανοῦμεν τὸν πέπλον;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δ' οὐκ Ἀθηναίαν ἐῶμεν πολιάδα;

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ πῶς ἂν ἔτι γένοιτ' ἂν εὐτακτος πόλις,
830 ὅπου θεὸς γυνὴ γεγονυῖα πανοπλίαν
ἔστηκ' ἔχουσα, Κλεισθένης δὲ κερκίδα;

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

τίς δαὶ καθέξει τῆς πόλεως τὸ Πελαργικόν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄρνις ἀφ' ἡμῶν τοῦ γένους τοῦ Περσικοῦ,
ὅσπερ λέγεται δεινότατος εἶναι πανταχοῦ
Ἄρεως νεοττός.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

835 ὦ νεοττὲ δέσποτα.
ὥς δ' ὁ θεὸς ἐπιτήδειος οἰκεῖν ἐπὶ πετρῶν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄγε νυν σὺ μὲν βάδιζε πρὸς τὸν ἀέρα
καὶ τοῖσι τειχίζουσι παραδιακόνει,
χάλικας παραφόρει, πηλὸν ἀποδὺς ὄργασον,
840 λεκάνην ἀνένεγκε, κατὰπεσ' ἀπὸ τῆς κλίμακος,
φυλακὰς κατὰστησαι, τὸ πῦρ ἔγκρυπτ' αἰεί,

833 ἡμῶν] ὑμῶν Kock

BIRDS

CHORUS LEADER

A gleaming⁷⁴ great city! Now what god shall be Citadel Guardian? For whom shall we weave the Robe?⁷⁵

PEISETAERUS

Why not let Athena Polias hold that post?

EUELPIDES

And just how can a city remain well disciplined, where a god born a woman stands there wearing full armor, while Cleisthenes⁷⁶ plies a spindle?

CHORUS LEADER

Then who *will* be taking charge of the city's Storkade?⁷⁷

PEISETAERUS

One of our birds, of the Persian breed,⁷⁸ the one universally known as a very fearsome Chick of Ares.

EUELPIDES

My Lord Chick! And a god so well suited to life on the rocks.

PEISETAERUS

(*to Euelpides*) Come on now, you take off for the sky and make yourself useful to the wall builders: bring them up gravel, roll up your sleeves and mix mortar, hand up a trough, fall off the ladder, station watchmen, keep the em-

⁷⁴ A favorite epithet of Athens, cf. *Acharnians* 637–40, *Knights* 1329, Pindar fr. 76.

⁷⁵ Athena Polias, Citadel Guardian of Athens, was presented with a robe at the Panathenaea.

⁷⁶ Often ridiculed as a beardless effeminate.

⁷⁷ The *Pelargikon*, designating the Mycenaean walls of the Acropolis and an enclosure at its foot. ⁷⁸ See 483–84.

ARISTOPHANES

κωδωνοφορῶν περίτρεχε καὶ κάθενδ' ἐκεῖ.
 κήρυκα δὲ πέμψον τὸν μὲν εἰς θεοὺς ἄνω,
 ἕτερον δ' ἄνωθεν αὖ παρ' ἀνθρώπους κάτω,
 κακείθεν αὖθις παρ' ἐμέ.

ΕΤΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

845 σὺν δέ γ' αὐτοῦ μένων
 οἴμωζε παρ' ἐμ'.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἴθ', ὦγάθ', οἱ πέμπω σ' ἐγώ.
 οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄνευ σοῦ τῶνδ' ἂ λέγω πεπράξεται.
 ἐγὼ δ' ἵνα θύσω τοῖσι καινοῖσιν θεοῖς,
 τὸν ἱερέα πέμψοντα τὴν πομπὴν καλῶ.
 850 παῖ παῖ, τὸ κανοῦν αἵρεσθε καὶ τὴν χέρνιβα.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(στρ) ὁμορροθῶ, συνθέλω,
 συμπαραινέσας ἔχω
 προσόδια μεγάλα σεμνὰ προσιέναι θεοῖ-
 855 σιν, ἅμα δὲ προσέτι χάριτος ἔνε-
 κα προβάτιόν τι θύειν.
 ἴτω ἴτω ἴτω δὲ Πυθιάς βοά,
 συναυλείτω δὲ Χαῖρις ᾠδᾶ.

858 συναυλείτω . . . ᾠδᾶ Hermann: συναδέτω . . . ᾠδὰν a

79 Modelled on a chorus from Sophocles' *Peleus*, according to the scholia.

BIRDS

bers glowing, run a tour with the bell, and bed down on site. Send one herald up to the gods, and another down to mankind below, and then report back to me.

EUELPIDES

Yes, and you can stay right here and report to me—in hell!

Exit EUELPIDES.

PEISETAERUS

Go where I tell you, there's a good fellow; none of what I've talked about will get done without you. As for me, I'd better sacrifice to the new gods, so I'll invite the priest to organize the procession. (*calling through the stage door*) Boy! Boy! You boys pick up the basket and the holy water.

Enter Xanthias and Manodorus with sacrificial requisites and a Piper costumed as a raven.

CHORUS⁷⁹

I am with you, I concur,
I hereby endorse your advice
to approach the gods with grand and solemn hymns
as we curry their favor as well
by sacrificing a wee sheep.⁸⁰
Up up up with a Pythian cry,
and let Chaeris pipe as we sing.⁸¹

Enter a PRIEST leading a goat.

⁸⁰ An anticlimactic victim for so important a ceremony, and the priest's goat even more so.

⁸¹ A lyre player and piper often ridiculed in comedy for poor technique.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

παῦσαι σὺν φύσῳ. Ἡράκλεις, τουτὶ τί ἦν;
 860 τουτὶ μὰ Δί' ἐγὼ πολλὰ δὴ καὶ δεῖν' ἰδὼν
 οὐπω κόρακ' εἶδον ἐμπεφορβειωμένον.
 ἱερεῦ, σὸν ἔργον, θῦε τοῖς καινοῖς θεοῖς.

ΙΕΡΕΤΣ

δράσω τάδ'. ἀλλὰ ποῦ 'στιν ὁ τὸ κανοῦν ἔχων;
 εὐχεσθε Ἑστία τῇ ὀρνιθείῳ
 865 καὶ ἱκτίνῳ τῷ ἐστιούχῳ
 καὶ ὀρνισιν Ὀλυμπίοις καὶ Ὀλυμπίασι
 πᾶσι καὶ πάσησιν—

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ Σουνιέρακε, χαῖρ', ἄναξ Πελαργικέ.

ΙΕΡΕΤΣ

καὶ κύκνῳ Πυθίῳ καὶ Δηλίῳ
 870 καὶ Λητοῖ Ὀρτυγομήτρᾳ
 καὶ Ἀρτέμιδι Ἀκαλανθίδι—

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκέτι Κολαινίς, ἀλλ' Ἀκαλανθὶς Ἀρτεμις.

ΙΕΡΕΤΣ

καὶ φρυγίλῳ Σαβαζίῳ
 καὶ στρούθῳ μεγάλῃ
 875 Μητρὶ θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων—

868 πελάργιε Sommerstein

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

(*to the Piper*) Stop your piping! Heracles, what *is* this? I've certainly seen many amazing sights, but this I've never seen, a raven wearing a piper's harness! Priest, you're on; start sacrificing to the new gods.

PRIEST

That I will, but where's the boy with the basket? All pray: to Hestia of the Birds, to Kite their Hearthkeeper, to the Olympian birds and birdesses each and all—

PEISETAERUS

Hail, Hawk of Sunium,⁸² Lord of the Seastork!

PRIEST

and the Swan of Pytho and Delos,⁸³ and Leto the Quail Mother,⁸⁴ and Artemis the Curlew—

PEISETAERUS

No more Colaenis,⁸⁵ now it's Artemis Curlew!

PRIEST

and Pigeon Sabazius, and the Great Ostrich Mother of gods and men—

⁸² Adapting an epithet of Poseidon.

⁸³ Apollo.

⁸⁴ I.e. the corncrake, alluding to Ortygia (Quail Island), where Leto gave birth to Artemis.

⁸⁵ Artemis' cult title in the deme Myrrhinus.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Δέσποινα Κυβέλη, στρουῦθε, μήτερ Κλεοκρίτου.

ΙΕΡΕΤΣ

διδόναι Νεφελοκοκκυγιεύσιν
ὑγίειαν καὶ σωτηρίαν
αὐτοῖσι καὶ Χίοισι—

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

880 Χίοισιν ἥσθην πανταχοῦ προσκειμένοις.

ΙΕΡΕΤΣ

καὶ ἥρωσιν ὄρνισι καὶ ἡρώων παισί,
πορφυρίωνι καὶ πελεκᾶντι
καὶ πελεκίνῳ καὶ φλέξιδι
καὶ τέτρακι καὶ ταῶνι
885 καὶ ἐλεᾶ καὶ βασκᾶ
καὶ ἐλασᾶ καὶ ἐδωλίῳ
καὶ καταρράκτη καὶ μελαγκορύφῳ
καὶ αἰγιθάλλῳ—

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

παῦ· ἐς κόρακας· παῦσαι καλῶν. ἰοὺ ἰοῦ·
890 ἐπὶ ποῖον, ὦ κακόδαιμον, ἱερεῖον καλεῖς
άλιαιέτους καὶ γῦπας; οὐχ ὁρᾷς ὅτι
ἰκτῖνος εἷς ἂν τοῦτό γ' οἷχοιθ' ἀρπάσας;
ἄπελθ' ἀφ' ἡμῶν καὶ σὺ καὶ τὰ στέμματα·
ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτὸς τουτογὶ θύσω μόνος.

886 ἐδωλίῳ Sommerstein cl. Σ et Phot.: ἐρωδίῳ a

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Lady Cybele the Ostrich, mother of Cleocritus!⁸⁶

PRIEST

grant to the inhabitants of Cloudcuckooland health and security, and for the Chians as well—⁸⁷

PEISETAERUS

It's funny how the Chians get tacked on everywhere!

PRIEST

and the Avian heroes and the Heroes' children, Porphyryion and White Pelican and Grey Pelican and Red Hawk and Grouse and Peacock and Reed Warbler and Teal and Harrier and Heron⁸⁸ and Tern and Black Tit and Blue Tit—

PEISETAERUS

Stop, damn you, stop your invitations! Whew! How big do you think this victim is, you jinx, that you're inviting eagles and vultures to share? Don't you realize that a single kite could snatch this away? Get out of here, and take your wreaths with you! I'll perform this sacrifice all by myself.

Exit PRIEST.

⁸⁶ Perhaps the archon of 413/12 and/or the Herald of the Mysteries who worked to restore democracy in 403 (Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.4.20–22).

⁸⁷ In the Athenian empire Chios and Methymna enjoyed the special status of autonomous allies.

⁸⁸ Translating the mss' *erodios*, which displaced the original *edolios*, an unidentified (and therefore untranslatable) bird.

ARISTOPHANES

ΧΟΡΟΣ

- (ἀντ) εἴτ' αὖθις αὖ τάρ᾽α σοι
 896 δεῖ με δεύτερον μέλος
 χέρνιβι θεοσεβὲς ὅσιον ἐπιβοᾶν, καλεῖν
 δὲ μάκαρας, ἓνα τινὰ μόνον, εἴ-
 900 περ ἱκανὸν ἔξετ' ὄψον.
 τὰ γὰρ παρόντα θύματ' οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν
 γένειόν τ' ἐστὶ καὶ κέρατα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

θύοντες εὐξώμεσθα τοῖς περίνοις θεοῖς.

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

- Νεφελοκοκκυγίαν
 905 τὰν εὐδαίμονα κλῆσον, ᾧ
 Μοῦσα, τεαῖς ἐν ὕμνων
 ἀοιδαῖς.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τουτὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα ποδαπόν; εἰπέ μοι, τίς εἶ;

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

- ἐγὼ μελιγλώσσω ἐπέων ἱεὺς ἀοιδὰν
 Μουσάων θεράπων ὀτρηρός,
 910 κατὰ τὸν Ὅμηρον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔπειτα δῆτα δούλος ὢν κόμην ἔχεις;

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

οὐκ, ἀλλὰ πάντες ἐσμέν οἱ διδάσκαλοι
 Μουσάων θεράποντες ὀτρηροί,
 κατὰ τὸν Ὅμηρον.

BIRDS

CHORUS

Then once more in your service
I must raise a second song,
godfearing and pious, for the ablution,
and invite the blessed gods—just one of them,
if you all want to have enough meat,
for the sacrifice you've got there is nothing
but a goatee and horns.

PEISETAERUS

As we sacrifice, let us pray to the feathered gods.

Enter POET.

POET

“Cloudcuckooland
the Blest now celebrate,
O Muse, in your hymns of song!”

PEISETAERUS

Now where did this thing come from? Please identify
yourself.

POET

“I am he that launches a song of honey-tongued
verses,
the Muses' eager vassal,”
to quote Homer.

PEISETAERUS

You mean you're a slave, with hair that long?

POET

“No, we master singers all are
the Muses' eager vassals,”
to quote Homer.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

- 915 οὐκ ἐτὸς ὀτρηρὸν καὶ τὸ ληδάριον ἔχεις.
ἀτάρ, ὦ ποιητά, κατὰ τί δεῦρ' ἀνεφθάρης;

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

μέλη πεποίηκ' εἰς τὰς Νεφελοκοκκυγίας
τὰς ὑμετέρας κύκλιά τε πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ
καὶ παρθένεια καὶ κατὰ τὰ Σιμωνίδου.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

- 920 ταυτὶ σὺ πότε' ἐποίησας; ἀπὸ ποίου χρόνου;

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

πάλαι, πάλαι δὴ τήνδ' ἐγὼ κλήζω πόλιν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἄρτι θύω τὴν δεκάτην ταύτης ἐγώ,
καὶ τοῦνομ' ὥσπερ παιδίῳ νυνδὴ ἔθην;

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

- ἀλλὰ τις ὠκεῖα Μουσάων φάτις
925 οἰάπερ ἵππων ἀμαρνυά.
σὺ δὲ πάτερ, κτίστορ Αἴτνας,
ζαθέων ἱερῶν ὁμώνυμε,
δὸς ἐμὶν ὅ τι περ τεᾶ κεφαλᾷ θέ-
930 λεις πρόφρων δόμεν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τουτὶ παρέξει τὸ κακὸν ἡμῖν πράγματα,
εἰ μή τι τούτῳ δόντες ἀποφενξούμεθα.

930 δόμεν West praeunte Blaydes: δόμεν ἐμὶν τείν fere codd.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

No wonder you've got a meager jacket to match! Now why the hell did you come up here, poet?

POET

I've composed songs for your Cloudcuckooland, lots of fine dithyrambs, maiden songs, and songs à la Simonides.⁸⁹

PEISETAERUS

When did you compose these songs? Starting when?

POET

I've been celebrating this city for a long, long time.

PEISETAERUS

But I've just begun its tenth-day sacrifice, and named it, like a baby, just moments ago!

POET

"Nay, the Muses' voice is a swift one,
like the twinkle of horses' hooves.
But you, father, founder of Aetna,
namesake of holy rites,
grant me whatever you wish by your nod
graciously to grant."⁹⁰

PEISETAERUS

This pest is going to cause us problems unless we give him something, and thus give him the slip. (*to a Slave*) You

⁸⁹ Simonides of Ceos (c. 566–468), reputedly the first poet to compose for a fee, had an ancient reputation for avarice, cf. testimonia 22–3 Campbell, *Peace* 697–99.

⁹⁰ Adapting a poem by Pindar (fr. 105a) written for the Syracusan ruler Hieron, who founded Aetna in 476/5.

ARISTOPHANES

οὗτος, σὺ μέντοι σπολάδα καὶ χιτῶν' ἔχεις,
ἀπόδυθι καὶ δὸς τῷ ποιητῇ τῷ σοφῷ.

935 ἔχε τὴν σπολάδα· πάντως δέ μοι ῥιγῶν δοκεῖς.

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

τόδε μὲν οὐκ ἀέκουσα φίλα

Μοῦσα δῶρον δέχεται

τὸ δὲ τεᾶ φρενὶ μάθε

Πινδάρειον ἔπος—

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

940 ἄνθρωπος ἡμῶν οὐκ ἀπαλλαχθήσεται

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

νομάδεσσι γὰρ ἐν Σκύθαις ἀλᾶται στρατῶν

ὃς ὑφαντοδόνητον ἔσθος οὐ πέπαται.

ἀκλεῆς δ' ἔβα

σπολὰς ἄνευ χιτῶνος.

945 ξύνες ὅ τοι λέγω.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ξυνίημ' ὅτι βούλει τὸν χιτωνίσκον λαβεῖν.

ἀπόδυθι· δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ποιητὴν ὠφελεῖν.

ἄπελθε τουτονὶ λαβών.

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

ἀπέρχομαι,

κᾶς τὴν πόλιν γ' ἐλθὼν ποιήσω τοιαδί·

950/51 “κλῆσον, ὦ χρυσόθρονε, τὰν τρομεράν, κρυεράν·

νιφόβολα πεδία πολύπορά τ' ἤλυθον.”

ἀλαλαί.

BIRDS

there, you've got a shirt and vest; take one off and give it to our artful poet. (*to the Poet*) Here, take this vest; you seem to me quite frigid.

POET

"With no reluctance does my dear
Muse accept this gift;
but learn you in your heart
a Pindaric saying—"91

PEISETAERUS

The fellow just won't part from us!

POET

"Yea among Scythian nomads does wander apart from
his people
the one who possesses no shuttle-actuated raiment;
and inglorious does go"—a jerkin without a jacket.
Pray understand what I mean.

PEISETAERUS

I understand that you want to snag that short jacket. (*to the other Slave*) Take it off; we've got to help the poet. (*giving the jacket to the Poet*) Take this, and off you go.

POET

I'm off, and when I get back I'm going to compose something like this in honor of your city:
"Celebrate, Muse on golden throne, the shivering,
freezing land;
to the snowblown many-pathed plains have I come."
Hurrah!

Exit POET.

91 Pindar fr. 105b.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

955 νῆ τὸν Δί' ἄλλ' ἤδη πέφευγας ταυταγὶ
 τὰ κρυερὰ τουδὶ τὸν χιτωνίσκον λαβών.
 τουτὶ μὰ Δί' ἐγὼ τὸ κακὸν οὐδέποτ' ἤλπισα,
 οὕτω ταχέως τοῦτον πεπύσθαι τὴν πόλιν.
 αὐθις σὺ περιχώρει λαβὼν τὴν χέρνιβα.
 εὐφημία ὅστω.

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

μὴ κατάρξῃ τοῦ τράγου.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

σὺ δ' εἰ τίς;

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

ὅστις; χρησμολόγος.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

960 οἴμωζέ νυν.

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

ὦ δαιμόνιε, τὰ θεῖα μὴ φαύλως φέρε·
 ὥς ἔστι Βάκιδος χρησμὸς ἄντικρυς λέγων
 εἰς τὰς Νεφελοκοκκυγίας.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κᾶπειτα πῶς

ταῦτ' οὐκ ἐχρησμολόγεις σὺ πρὶν ἐμὲ τὴν πόλιν
 τήνδ' οἰκίσαι;

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

(*calling after him*) But surely you've escaped from the freezing cold, now that you've snagged that jacket!—Good god, that was an annoyance I never expected, that he should have heard about our city so soon. (*to a Slave*) Boy, make another circuit with that holy water. Auspicious speech, please.

Enter ORACLE COLLECTOR

ORACLE COLLECTOR

Don't start on that goat!

PEISETAERUS

What? Who are you?

ORACLE COLLECTOR

Why, an oracle collector.

PEISETAERUS

Then to hell with you.

ORACLE COLLECTOR

You daredevil, don't make light of religious matters! There is an oracle of Bacis⁹² explicitly referring to Cloudcuckoo-land.

PEISETAERUS

How come you didn't divulge this oracle *before* I founded the city?

⁹² A legendary prophet whose oracles, many of which concerned international relations, were collected and discussed during the Peloponnesian War, cf. *Knights* 123–4, 1003–4, *Peace* 1070.

ARISTOPHANES

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

965

τὸ θεῖον ἐνεπόδιζέ με.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄλλ' οὐδὲν οἶον εἰσακούσαι τῶν ἐπῶν.

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

“ἄλλ' ὅταν οἰκήσωσι λύκοι πολιαί τε κορώναι
ἐν ταύτῳ τὸ μεταξὺ Κορίνθου καὶ Σικυῶνος—”

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί οὖν προσήκει δῆτ' ἐμοὶ Κορινθίων;

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

970

ἤνιξαθ' ὁ Βάκισ τοῦτο πρὸς τὸν ἀέρα.
“πρῶτον Πανδώρα θῦσαι λευκότριχα κριόν·
ὃς δέ κ' ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἔλθῃ πρῶτιστα προφήτης,
τῷ δόμεν ἱμάτιον καθαρὸν καὶ καινὰ πέδιλα—”

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔνεστι καὶ τὰ πέδιλα;

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

λαβὲ τὸ βυβλίον.

975

“καὶ φιάλην δοῦναι καὶ σπλάγχνων χεῖρ'
ἐνιπλήσαι,—”

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ σπλάγχνα διδόν' ἔνεστι;

⁹³ Riddling, because these territories were contiguous.

⁹⁴ Athens and Corinth had long been bitter enemies.

BIRDS

ORACLE COLLECTOR

Religious scruple restrained me.

PEISETAERUS

Well, nothing beats listening to the actual verses.

ORACLE COLLECTOR

“Nay when wolves and grey crows shall together have
their abode
in the place twixt Corinth and Sicyon—”⁹³

PEISETAERUS

But what have I got to do with any Corinthians?⁹⁴

ORACLE COLLECTOR

By that enigma Bacis meant the sky.
“first sacrifice to Pandora⁹⁵ a ram with white fleece,
and whosoever arrives first as expounder of my
words,
to him give a spotless cloak and fresh sandals—”

PEISETAERUS

Are sandals really in there?

ORACLE COLLECTOR

(*showing him*) Here's the book.
“and give him the chalice, and fill up his hands with
innards—”

PEISETAERUS

Giving innards is in there too?

⁹⁵ Not the allegorical girl with the jar of evils in Hesiod's *Works* 42–105, but the earth goddess whose name means “giver of all gifts,” some of which the Oracle Collector now hopes to receive.

ARISTOPHANES

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

λαβὲ τὸ βυβλίον.

“κἂν μὲν, θέσπιε κούρε, ποιῆς ταῦθ’ ὥς ἐπιτέλλω,
αἰετὸς ἐν νεφέλῃσι γενήσεται· αἱ δέ κε μὴ δῶς,
οὐκ ἔσει οὐ τρυγών, οὐ λάιος, οὐ δρυκολάπτης.”

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ ταῦτ’ ἔνεστ’ ἐνταῦθα;

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

980

λαβὲ τὸ βυβλίον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐδὲν ἄρ’ ὅμοιός ἐσθ’ ὁ χρησμὸς τουτῶι,
ὃν ἐγὼ παρὰ τὰ πόλλωνος ἐξεγραψάμην·
“αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν ἄκλητος ἰὼν ἄνθρωπος ἀλαζὼν
λυπῇ θύοντας καὶ σπλαγχνεύειν ἐπιθυμῇ,
985 δὴ τότε χρὴ τύπτειν αὐτὸν πλευρῶν τὸ μεταξὺ—”

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

οὐδὲν λέγειν οἶμαί σε.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

λαβὲ τὸ βυβλίον.

“καὶ φείδου μηδὲν μηδ’ αἰετοῦ ἐν νεφέλῃσιν,
μήτ’ ἦν Λάμπων ἦ μήτ’ ἦν ὁ μέγας Διοπέιθης.”

979 οὐ λάιος Meineke: οὐδ’ (οὐκ A) αἰετός a

BIRDS

ORACLE COLLECTOR

Here's the book.

“and if, inspired youth, you carry out the orders I
give you,
you shall become an eagle midst the clouds; but if
you give not,
you shall be not a turtledove, not a rock thrush, not a
woodpecker.”

PEISETAERUS

That's in there too?

ORACLE COLLECTOR

Here's the book.

PEISETAERUS

(*producing a book*) Well now, your oracle doesn't match
this one at all, an oracle I personally wrote down from
Apollo:

“Yea when a charlatan type who arrives uninvited
vexes the sacrificers and desires a share of the
innards,
then must you smite him in the place twixt the ribs—”

ORACLE COLLECTOR

You must be kidding.

PEISETAERUS

Here's the book.

“and spare not even an eagle midst the clouds,
not if he be Lampon nor yet the great Diopeithes.”⁹⁶

⁹⁶ An oracular expert and prosecutor of atheists and intellectuals.

ARISTOPHANES

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

καὶ ταῦτ' ἔνεστ' ἐνταῦθα;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

λαβὲ τὸ βυβλίον.

οὐκ εἶ θύραζ'; ἐς κόρακας.

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

990

οἶμοι δείλαιος.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκουν ἐτέρωσε χρησμολογήσεις ἐκτρέχων;

ΜΕΤΩΝ

ἤκω παρ' ὑμᾶς—

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἕτερον αὖ τουτὶ κακόν.

τί δ' αὖ σὺ δράσων; τίς ἰδέα βουλευματος;

τίς ἠπίνοια, τίς ὁ κόθορνος τῆς ὁδοῦ;

ΜΕΤΩΝ

995

γεωμετρήσαι βούλομαι τὸν ἀέρα

ὑμῖν διελεῖν τε κατὰ γύας.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πρὸς τῶν θεῶν,

σὺ δ' εἶ τίς ἀνδρῶν;

⁹⁹⁴ τίς ὁ κόθορνος τῆς] τίς ποθ' οὔρνις τῆς Blaydes: τῆς κοθορνωτῆς Sommerstein

⁹⁹⁶ κατὰ γύας Dawes: κατ' ἀγνιάς a

BIRDS

ORACLE COLLECTOR

That's in there too?

PEISETAERUS

(*hitting him with the book*) Here's the book! Now get the hell out of here!

ORACLE COLLECTOR

Oh mercy me!

Exit ORACLE COLLECTOR

PEISETAERUS

Go on, scat! Do your oracle mongering somewhere else!

Enter METON, wearing effeminate boots and carrying out-sized geometrical instruments.

METON⁹⁷

I have come here—

PEISETAERUS

(*aside*) Here's another nuisance. (*to Meton*) And what have *you* come here to do? What form does your plan take? What idea, what buskin, is afoot?

METON

I want to survey the air for you and parcel it into acres.

PEISETAERUS

Good heavens, who on earth are you?

⁹⁷ The famous geometer and astronomer. His unmanly caricature in this scene may be connected with the rumor that he had resorted to arson just before the expedition to Sicily in order to evade service, cf. Plutarch *Nicias* 13.7–8, *Alcibiades* 17.5–6, Aelian *Varia Historia* 13.12.

ARISTOPHANES

METΩN

ὅστις εἴμ' ἐγώ; Μέτων,
ὃν οἶδεν Ἑλλὰς χῶ Κολωνός.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

εἰπέ μοι,
ταυτὶ δέ σοι τί ἐστι;

METΩN

κανόνες ἀέρος.

1000 αὐτίκα γὰρ ἀήρ ἐστι τὴν ἰδέαν ὅλος
κατὰ πνιγέα μάλιστα. προσθεῖς οὖν ἐγὼ
τὸν κανόν' ἄνωθεν τουτονὶ τὸν καμπύλον,
ἐνθεῖς διαβήτην—μανθάνεις;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ μανθάνω.

METΩN

1005 ὀρθῶ μετρήσω κανόνι προστιθείς, ἵνα
ὁ κύκλος γένηταί σοι τετράγωνος καὶ μέσῳ
ἀγορά, φέρονσαι δ' ὥσιν εἰς αὐτὴν ὁδοὶ
ὀρθαὶ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ μέσον, ὥσπερ δ' ἀστέρος
αὐτοῦ κυκλοτεροῦς ὄντος ὀρθαὶ πανταχῇ
ἀκτῖνες ἀπολάμπωσιν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄνθρωπος Θαλής.

Μέτων—

METΩN

τί ἐστιν;

BIRDS

METON

Who am I? Meton, renowned in Greece, and in Colonus too.⁹⁸

PEISETAERUS

And pray tell what's all this you've got?

METON

Air rulers. Because for starters, the sky in its entirety is like a casserole cover. Accordingly, by positioning this ruler, which is curved, over its top, inserting a compass—do you follow?

PEISETAERUS

I don't follow.

METON

—and laying a straight ruler alongside it I'll take a measure, so that you will get a circle squared, with a marketplace in the middle, and so there will be straight streets running into it and meeting at the very center, so that just as from a star, itself being round, rays will beam out straight in every direction.

PEISETAERUS

The man's a Thales.⁹⁹ Meton—

METON

What is it?

⁹⁸ A district of downtown Athens where Meton had set up a sundial, cf. fr. 227, Philochorus FGrH 328 F 122.

⁹⁹ The early sixth-century founder of the Milesian school of natural science and philosophy, who had become a byword for genius, cf. *Clouds* 180.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1010

ἴσθ' ὅτιη φιλω σ' ἐγώ,
κάμοι πιθόμενος ὑπαποκίνει τῆς ὁδοῦ.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

τί δ' ἐστὶ δεινόν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὥσπερ ἐν Λακεδαίμονι
ξενηλατοῦσι καὶ κεκίνηνταιί τινες.
πληγαὶ συχναὶ κατ' ἄστυ.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

μῶν στασιάζετε;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μὰ τὸν Δί' οὐ δῆτ'.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

ἀλλὰ πῶς;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1015

ὁμοθυμαδὸν
σποδεῖν ἅπαντας τοὺς ἀλαζόνας δοκεῖ.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

ὑπάγοιμί γ' ἄρ' ἄν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νὴ Δί', ὥς οὐκ οἶδ' ἂν εἰ
φθαίης ἄν· ἐπείκεινται γὰρ ἐγγυὲς αὐταί.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

οἴμοι κακοδαίμων.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

You know I'm fond of you, so take my advice and hit the road.

METON

What's the problem?

PEISETAERUS

It's like Sparta: they're expelling foreigners, and punches have started flying pretty thick and fast all over town.

METON

You're not having a civil war, are you?

PEISETAERUS

God no, not that!

METON

What then?

PEISETAERUS

There's a unanimous decision to beat up all charlatans.

METON

In that case I *will* be going.

PEISETAERUS

Good idea; I don't know if you can get away in time, because those punches are close at hand. (*punching him*)

METON

Heaven help me!

Exit METON

1013 -τοῦσι Elmsley: -τοῦνται a S: -τοῦντες v.l. Σ

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἔλεγον ἐγὼ πάλαι;

1020 οὐκ ἀναμετρήσει σαυτὸν ἀπιὼν ἀλλαχῇ;

ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

ποῦ πρόξενοι;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τίς ὁ Σαρδανάπαλλος οὐτοσί;

ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

ἐπίσκοπος ἦκω δεῦρο τῷ κυάμῳ λαχὼν
εἰς τὰς Νεφελοκοκκυγίας.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐπίσκοπος;

ἐπεμψε δὲ τίς σε δεῦρο;

ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

φαῦλον βυβλίον

Τελέου τι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1025 βούλει δῆτα τὸν μισθὸν λαβὼν
μὴ πράγματ' ἔχειν ἀλλ' ἀπιέναι;

ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

νὴ τοὺς θεούς.

ἐκκλησιάσαι γοῦν ἐδεόμην οἴκοι μένων·
ἔστιν γὰρ ἃ δι' ἐμοῦ πέπρακται Φαρνάκη.

¹⁰⁰ Exemplifying the travelling inspectors sent by Assembly decree to enforce Athenian policies in the cities of the empire.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Haven't I been trying to warn you? Go somewhere else, and survey yourself!

Enter INSPECTOR, well dressed and carrying a pair of ballot boxes.

INSPECTOR¹⁰⁰

Where can I find consuls?

PEISETAERUS

Who's this Sardanapallus?¹⁰¹

INSPECTOR

I'm an Inspector, duly allotted to visit Cloude-cuckooland.

PEISETAERUS

Inspector? On whose authority?

INSPECTOR

Some petty bill of Teleas'.

PEISETAERUS

Then would you like to take your pay and just leave, without any fuss?

INSPECTOR

I believe I will. I should be back home anyway, speaking in the Assembly; there's some business I've been handling for Pharnaces.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ According to the Greeks, the wealthy and degenerate last king of Assyria before the loss of that empire to the Medes and Babylonians in the late seventh century.

¹⁰² Persian satrap of Dascyleion until c. 413, when he was succeeded by his brother Pharnabazus, cf. Thucydides 2.67, 8.6, 58.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄπιθι λαβών· ἔστιν δ' ὁ μισθὸς οὐτοσί.

ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

τουτὶ τί ἦν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1030 ἐκκλησία περὶ Φαρνάκου.

ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

μαρτύρομαι τυπτόμενος ὦν ἐπίσκοπος.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἀποσοβήσεις; οὐκ ἀποίσεις τὸ κάδω;
οὐ δεινά; καὶ πέμπουσιν ἤδη 'πισκόπους
εἰς τὴν πόλιν, πρὶν καὶ τεθύσθαι τοῖς θεοῖς;

ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ

1035 “ἐὰν δ' ὁ Νεφελοκοκκυγιεὺς τὸν Ἀθηναῖον ἀδικῇ—”

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τουτὶ τί ἔστιν αὖ κακόν, τὸ βυβλίον;

ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ

ψηφισματοπώλης εἰμὶ καὶ νόμους νέους
ἦκω παρ' ὑμᾶς δεῦρο πωλήσων.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὸ τί;

ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ

1040 “χρῆσθαι Νεφελοκοκκυγιάς τοῖς αὐτοῖς μέτροισι

1040 τοῖς αὐτοῖς Boissonade: τοῖσδε τοῖς α

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Take your pay and leave; I've got it right here (*punches him*).

INSPECTOR

Hey, what was that?

PEISETAERUS

An assembly about Pharnaces.

INSPECTOR

Witnesses! Inspector under attack!

INSPECTOR runs off.

PEISETAERUS

Shoo, shoo, away with you! And take your ballot boxes too! Amazing—they're already sending inspectors to our city, before we've even held our founding sacrifice!

Enter DECREE SELLER, with a large book.

DECREE SELLER

(*reading*) "And if a Cloundcuckoolander commits an offence against an Athenian—"

PEISETAERUS

What sort of nuisance is this now, this book?

DECREE SELLER

I'm a decree seller, and I'm here to sell you some new laws.

PEISETAERUS

For instance?

DECREE SELLER

"The Cloundcuckoolanders are to use the selfsame mea-

ARISTOPHANES

καὶ σταθμοῖσι καὶ ψηφίσμασι καθάπερ Ὀλοφύξιοι.”

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

σὺν δέ γ’ οἷσπερ Ὀτοτύξιοι χρήσει τάχα.

ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ

οὗτος, τί πάσχεις;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1045 οὐκ ἀποίσεις τοὺς νόμους;
πικροὺς ἐγὼ σοι τήμερον δείξω νόμους.

ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

καλοῦμαι Πεισέταιρον ὕβρεως εἰς τὸν Μουνιχιῶνα
μῆνα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄλληθες, οὗτος; ἔτι γὰρ ἐνταῦθ’ ἦσθα σύ;

ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ

1050 “ἐὰν δέ τις ἐξελαύνῃ τοὺς ἄρχοντας καὶ μὴ δέχεται
κατὰ τὴν στήλην—”

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἴμοι κακοδαίμων, καὶ σὺ γὰρ ἐνταῦθ’ ἦσθ’ ἔτι;

ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

ἀπολῶ σε καὶ γράψω σε μυρίας δραχμάς—

¹⁰³ Parodying the language of the Coinage Decree (IG i³ 1453 = ML 45, date uncertain), and substituting “decrees” for “coin-

BIRDS

sure, weights, and decrees as the Olophyxians."¹⁰³

PEISETAERUS

And *you'll* soon be getting the same as the Black-and-Bluesians! (*strikes him*)

DECREE SELLER

Hey, what's the matter with you?

PEISETAERUS

Take your laws away from here! In a moment I'll be showing you some laws you won't like!

DECREE SELLER runs off; INSPECTOR reappears.

INSPECTOR

I summon Peisetaerus to appear in the month of Munychion on a charge of assault!

PEISETAERUS

Oh, is that right? What are you still doing here?

DECREE SELLER reappears.

DECREE SELLER

"And should anyone expel the officials and refuse them entry under the terms of the decree—"

PEISETAERUS

Heaven help me, are you still here too?

INSPECTOR

I'll ruin you! I'll write you up for a ten thousand drachma—

age." Olophyxos was a small Athenian ally on the Athos peninsula; Peisetaerus counters with the made-up name "Ototyxi-ans," punning on *ototoi* (a cry of pain).

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐγὼ δὲ σοῦ γε τὰ κάδῳ διασκεδῶ.

ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ

μέμνησ' ὅτε τῆς στήλης κατετίλας ἐσπέρας;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1055 αἰβοῖ· λαβέτω τις αὐτόν. οὔτος, οὐ μενεῖς;
ἀπίωμεν ἡμεῖς ὡς τάχιστ' ἐντευθενὶ
θύσοντες εἴσω τοῖς θεοῖσι τὸν τράγον.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(στρ) ἤδη 'μοὶ τῷ παντόπτα
καὶ παντάρχα θνητοὶ πάντες
1060 θύσουσ' εὐκταίαις εὐχαῖς.
πᾶσαν μὲν γὰρ γᾶν ὀπτεύω,
σώζω δ' εὐθαλείς καρποὺς
κτείνων παμφύλων γένναν
θηρῶν, ἃ πᾶν τ' ἐν γαίᾳ
1065 ἐκ κάλυκος αὐξανόμενον γέννισι παμφάγοις
δένδρεσί τ' ἐφημένα καρπὸν ἀποβόσκειται.
κτείνω δ' οἱ κήπους εὐώδεις
φθείρουσιν λύμαις ἐχθίσταις·
έρπετά τε καὶ δάκετα <πάνθ'> ὅσαπερ
1070 ἔστιν, ὑπ' ἐμᾶς πτέρυγος
ἐν φοναῖς ὄλλυται.

1069 suppl. Dissen et Dobree

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

And I'll smash both of your ballot boxes!

INSPECTOR flees.

DECREE SELLER

Do you recall those evenings when you used to crap on the inscribed decree?

PEISETAERUS

Pew! Somebody grab hold of him!

DECREE SELLER flees.

Hey, why don't you stick around? (*to Slaves*) Let's get away from here as fast as we can, inside, where we can sacrifice the goat to the gods.

PEISETAERUS and Slaves go inside.

CHORUS

To me, the omniscient
and omnipotent, shall all mortals
now sacrifice with pious prayers.
For I keep watch over all the earth,
and keep safe the blooming crops
by slaying the brood of all species
of critters, who with omnivorous jaws
devour all that in soil sprouts from the pod
and the fruit of the trees where they perch;
and I slay those who spoil fragrant gardens
with defilements most offensive;
and upon creepers and biters every one
from the force of my wing
comes murderous destruction.

ARISTOPHANES

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

- τῇδε μέντοι θῆμέρα μάλιστ' ἐπαναγορεύεται
 ἣν ἀποκτείνῃ τις ὑμῶν Διαγόραν τὸν Μήλιον,
 λαμβάνειν τάλαντον, ἣν τε τῶν τυράννων τίς τινα
 1075 τῶν τεθνηκότων ἀποκτείνῃ, τάλαντον λαμβάνειν.
 βουλόμεσθ' οὖν νῦν ἀνειπεῖν ταῦτα χῆμεῖς ἐνθάδε·
 ἣν ἀποκτείνῃ τις ὑμῶν Φιλοκράτη τὸν Στρούθιον,
 λήψεται τάλαντον, ἣν δὲ ζῶντά γ' ἀγάγῃ, τέτταρα,
 ὅτι συνείρων τοὺς σπίνους πωλεῖ καθ' ἑπτὰ
 τοῦβολουῦ,
 1080 εἶτα φυσῶν τὰς κίχλας δείκνυσι καὶ λυμαίνεται,
 τοῖς τε κοψίχοισιν εἰς τὰς ῥίνας ἐγχεῖ τὰ πτερά,
 τὰς περιστεράς θ' ὁμοίως ξυλλαβὼν εἵρξας ἔχει,
 κἀπαναγκάζει παλεύειν δεδεμένας ἐν δικτύῳ.
 ταῦτα βουλόμεσθ' ἀνειπεῖν· κεῖ τις ὄρνιθας τρέφει
 1085 εἰργμένους ὑμῶν ἐν αὐλῇ, φράζομεν μεθιέναι.
 ἣν δὲ μὴ πείθησθε, συλληφθέντες ὑπὸ τῶν ὀρνέων
 αὐθις ὑμεῖς αὖ παρ' ἡμῖν δεδεμένοι παλεύσετε.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

- (ἀντ) εὐδαιμον φῦλον πτηνῶν
 οἰωνῶν, οἱ χειμῶνος μὲν
 1090 χλαίνας οὐκ ἀμπισχνοῦνται·

¹⁰⁷⁸ ζῶντά γ' ἀγάγῃ Burges: ζωνταπαγαγῃ Π1: ζῶντ' ἀγάγῃ α

¹⁰⁴ Presumably (but not demonstrably) the first day of the Dionysia.

BIRDS

CHORUS LEADER

On this particular day,¹⁰⁴ you know, we hear it again proclaimed that whoever of you kills Diagoras the Melian¹⁰⁵ shall get a talent, and whoever kills any of the long deceased tyrants¹⁰⁶ shall get a talent. So now we want to make our own announcement right here: whoever of you kills Philocrates the Sparrovian shall get a talent, and four for bringing him in alive, on the grounds that he strings finches together and sells them seven an obol; furthermore that he inflates thrushes for degrading display; and crams the noses of blackbirds with their own feathers; and captures pigeons, keeps them caged, and forces them to play decoy, tethered to a net. That's the announcement we want to make. And whoever of you keeps caged birds in the yard, we order you to let them go; if you disobey, you will be captured by the birds, and it will be your turn to play decoy on our turf.

CHORUS

Happy the race of feathered
birds, who in the winter
need wear no woolen cloaks;

¹⁰⁵ Dubbed "Diagoras of Quibbleton" by Hermippus in 430 (fr. 43) and aligned with Socrates in *Clouds* 830; outlawed for writings critical of the Eleusinian Mysteries, cf. Craterus *FGrH* 342 F 16 and Melanthius 326 F 3.

¹⁰⁶ Though the last Athenian tyrant had been expelled in 510 and there had been no real threat of a return to tyranny since the Persian Wars, demagogues kept the threat alive (cf. e.g. *Wasps* 488–507), and the recent scandals surrounding Alcibiades had reawakened popular fears of antidemocratic plots (Thucydides 6.53 ff.).

- οὐδ' αὖ θερμὴ πνίγους ἡμᾶς
 ἄκτις τηλαυγὴς θάλπει·
 ἀλλ' ἀνθηρῶν λειμώνων
 φύλλ' ἐν κόλποις ἐνναίω,
 1095 ἡνίκ' ἂν ὁ θεσπέσιος ὄξυν μέλος ἀχέτας
 θάλπεσι μεσημβρινοῖς ἡλιομανῆς βοᾷ.
 χειμάζω δ' ἐν κοίλοις ἄντροις
 νύμφαις οὐρέiais ξυμπαίζων·
 ἡρινά τε βοσκόμεθα παρθένια
 1100 λευκότροφα μύρτα Χαρί-
 των τε κηπεύματα.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

- τοῖς κριταῖς εἰπεῖν τι βουλόμεσθα τῆς νίκης πέρι,
 ὅσ' ἀγάθ', ἣν κρίνωσιν ἡμᾶς, πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς
 δώσομεν,
 ὥστε κρείττω δῶρα πολλῶ τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου λαβεῖν.
 1105 πρῶτα μὲν γάρ, οὗ μάλιστα πᾶς κριτῆς ἐφίεται,
 γλαῦκες ὑμᾶς οὔ ποτ' ἐπιλείψουσι Λαυρειωτικά·
 ἀλλ' ἐνοικήσουσιν ἔνδον, ἔν τε τοῖς βαλλαντίοις
 ἐννεοττεύσουσι κακλέψουσι μικρὰ κέρματα.
 εἶτα πρὸς τούτοισιν ὥσπερ ἐν ἱεροῖς οἰκήσετε·
 1110 τὰς γὰρ ὑμῶν οἰκίας ἐρέψομεν πρὸς αἰετόν·
 καὶ λαχόντες ἀρχίδιον εἶθ' ἀρπάσαι βούλησθέ τι,
 ὄξυν ἱερακίσκον εἰς τὰς χεῖρας ὑμῖν δώσομεν.
 ἦν δέ που δειπνήτε, πρηγορεῶνας ὑμῖν πέμψομεν.
 ἦν δὲ μὴ κρίνητε, χαλκεύεσθε μηνίσκους φορεῖν
 1115 ὥσπερ ἀνδριάντες· ὥς ὑμῶν ὅς ἂν μὴ μῆν' ἔχη,

BIRDS

nor in summer's stifling heat
do the long rays roast us.
For I dwell among the flora
in the lap of flowery meadows,
when the sun-crazy cicada with voice divine
in the noonday heat intones his keen song;
and I winter in hollow caverns,
frolicking with mountain nymphs;
and in spring we graze on myrtle berries,
maidenly in their white florets,
and the fruits of the Graces' garden.

CHORUS LEADER

We'd like to say a word to the judges about winning the prize, namely all the benefits we'll bestow on them all if they vote for us, so they'll get far better gifts than Paris got.¹⁰⁷ Let's begin with what every judge craves most, those owls from Laureium:¹⁰⁸ they will never run out on you, no, they'll move into your house, and nest in your wallets, and hatch out small change. On top of that, you'll live in houses like temples, because we'll roof them with eagle gables. If you draw a nice little post, then want to do some pilfering, we'll equip you with a sharp crowbar. And if you go out for dinner, we'll send you each off with a gizzard. But if you vote against us, you'd better make some copper lids to wear, like statues, because any of you who doesn't

¹⁰⁷ Priam's son Alexander, better known as Paris, served as the judge of a divine beauty contest and got Helen as a bribe from Aphrodite for picking her over Hera and Athena.

¹⁰⁸ Coins made from silver mined at Laureium and bearing Athena's owl as an emblem.

ARISTOPHANES

ὅταν ἔχητε χλανίδα λευκήν, τότε μάλισθ' οὕτω
 δίκην
 δώσεθ' ἡμῖν, πᾶσι τοῖς ὄρنيσι κατατιλώμενοι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὰ μὲν ἱέρ' ἡμῖν ἐστίν, ὠρνιθες, καλά.
 ἀλλ' ὥς ἀπὸ τοῦ τείχους πάρεστιν ἄγγελος
 1120 οὐδεὶς, ὅτου πευσόμεθα τὰκεῖ πράγματα.
 ἀλλ' οὔτοσὶ τρέχει τις Ἀλφειὸν πνέων.

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α΄

ποῦ ποῦ 'στι, ποῦ ποῦ ποῦ 'στι, ποῦ ποῦ ποῦ 'στι,
 ποῦ,
 ποῦ Πεισέταιρός ἐστιν ἄρχων;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔτοσί.

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α΄

ἐξωκοδόμηταί σοι τὸ τεῖχος.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

εὖ λέγεις.

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α΄

1125 κάλλιστον ἔργον καὶ μεγαλοπρεπέστατον·
 ὥστ' ἂν ἐπάνω μὲν Προξενίδης ὁ Κομπασεὺς
 καὶ Θεογένης ἐναντίω δὺ' ἄρματε,
 ἵππων ὑπόντων μέγεθος ὅσον ὁ δούριος,
 ὑπὸ τοῦ πλάτους ἂν παρελασαίτην.

BIRDS

have a lid, whenever you're wearing a white suit, that's just when you'll pay the piper, getting crapped on by all of the birds.

Enter PEISETAERUS.

PEISETAERUS

Our sacrifice, dear birds, has been auspicious. But how strange that no messenger is here from the wall, to brief us on how things are going there. Wait, here comes someone on the run, panting like an Olympic sprinter.

Enter FIRST MESSENGER.

FIRST MESSENGER

Whe whe where's, whe whe whe where's, whe whe whe where's, whe whe where's Peisetaerus, the ruler?

PEISETAERUS

Right here.

FIRST MESSENGER

Your wall is all built.

PEISETAERUS

Good news!

FIRST MESSENGER

A very fine and very impressive achievement; it's so wide on top, Proxenides of Braggarton¹⁰⁹ and Theogenes could hitch two chariots to horses the size of the wooden one,¹¹⁰ and pass each other head-on!

¹⁰⁹ Also called a braggart in *Wasps* 324–25.

¹¹⁰ In which the Greeks concealed themselves in order to enter Troy.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Ἡράκλεις.

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α΄

1130 τὸ δὲ μῆκός ἐστι, καὶ γὰρ ἐμέτρησ' αὐτ' ἐγώ,
ἐκατοντορόγνιον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ Πόσειδον, τοῦ μάκρους.
τίνες ὠκοδόμησαν αὐτὸ τηλικουτονί;

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α΄

ὄρνιθες, οὐδεὶς ἄλλος, οὐκ Αἰγύπτιος
πλινθοφόρος, οὐ λιθουργός, οὐ τέκτων παρῆν,
1135 ἀλλ' αὐτόχειρες, ὥστε θαυμάζειν ἐμέ.
ἐκ μὲν γε Λιβύης ἦκον ὥς τρισμῦραι
γέρανοι θεμελίους καταπεπωκῦναι λίθους·
τούτους δ' ἐτύκιζον αἱ κρέκες τοῖς ῥύγχεσιν.
ἕτεροι δ' ἐπλινθούργουν πελαργοὶ μύριοι
1140 ὕδωρ δ' ἐφόρουν κάτωθεν εἰς τὸν ἀέρα
οἱ χαραδριοὶ καὶ τᾶλλα ποτάμι' ὄρνεα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐπηλοφόρουν δ' αὐτοῖσι τίνες;

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α΄

ἐρωδιοὶ
λεκάναισι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὸν δὲ πηλὸν ἐνεβάλλοντο πῶς;

1139 -οῦργουν Bergk: -οφόρουν a

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Heracles!

FIRST MESSENGER

And as for its height—and I measured it myself—it's a hundred fathoms.

PEISETAERUS

Poseidon, that's high! Who built it so tall?

FIRST MESSENGER

Birds and birds alone, with no Egyptian brickbearer in sight, no mason, no carpenter, all with their own hands, an amazing sight to see. From Libya there came some thirty thousand cranes, who'd swallowed stones for the foundations, and these the corncrakes blocked with their bills, while another ten thousand storks made bricks, and the curlews with their fellow river birds brought water up to the sky.

PEISETAERUS

And who brought clay for them?

FIRST MESSENGER

Herons, in hods.

PEISETAERUS

And how did they get the clay into the hods?

ARISTOPHANES

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α΄

1145 τοῦτ', ὦγάθ', ἐξηύρητο καὶ σοφώτατα·
οἱ χῆνες ὑποτύπτοντες ὥσπερ ταῖς ἄμαις
εἰς τὰς λεκάνας ἐνέβαλλον αὐτὸν τοῖν ποδοῖν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δῆτα πόδες ἂν οὐκ ἂν ἐργασαίαιτο;

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α΄

1150 καὶ νῆ Δί' αἱ νῆτταί γε περιεζωσμέναι
ἐπλινθοβόλουν· ἄνω δὲ τὸν ὑπαγωγέα
ἐπέτοντ' ἔχουσai κατόπιν, ὥσπερ παιδία,
τὸν πηλὸν ἐν τοῖς στόμασιν αἱ χελιδόνες.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δῆτα μισθωτοὺς ἂν ἔτι μισθοῖτό τις;
φέρ' ἴδω, τί δαί; τὰ ξύλινα τοῦ τείχους τίνες
ἀπηργάσαντ';

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α΄

ὄρνιθες ἦσαν τέκτονες

1155 σοφώτατοι πελεκᾶντες, οἱ τοῖς ῥύγχεσιν
ἀπεπελέκησαν τὰς πύλας· ἦν δ' ὁ κτύπος
αὐτῶν πελεκώντων ὥσπερ ἐν ναυπηγίῳ.
καὶ νῦν ἅπαντ' ἐκείνα πεπύλωται πύλαις
καὶ βεβαλάνωται καὶ φυλάττεται κύκλῳ,
1160 ἐφοδεύεται, κωδωνοφορεῖται, πανταχῇ
φυλακαὶ καθεστήκασι καὶ φρυκτωρίαι
ἐν τοῖσι πύργοις. ἀλλ' ἐγὼ μὲν ἀποτρέχων
ἀπονύψομαι· σὺ δ' αὐτὸς ἤδη τᾶλλα δρᾶ.

BIRDS

FIRST MESSENGER

That, my friend, was sheer genius: the geese dug their feet into it like shovels, and scooped it right into the herons' hods.

PEISETAERUS

I guess nothing's impossible if you put your feet to it!

FIRST MESSENGER

And by god there were the ducks, wearing belts and laying the bricks; and up flew the swallows with the trowel at their rear, like kiddies,¹¹¹ and plaster in their mouths.

PEISETAERUS

Then why go on hiring workmen? Let's see, what else? Who did the woodwork for the wall?

FIRST MESSENGER

The carpenter birds, very skilled, were woodpeckers, who pecked out the gates with their beaks; the din of their pecking was just like a shipyard! And now all those gateways are gated and bolted and surrounded by guards, patrolled by bell ringers; everywhere sentries are in place, with signal fires on the towers. As for me, I'm off to have a bath; see to the rest yourself.

Exit FIRST MESSENGER.

¹¹¹ The Greek is obscure and possibly corrupt.

¹¹⁴⁹ -βόλουν Higham: -φόρουν a S

¹¹⁵¹ καὶ Lenting: τὸν a

ARISTOPHANES

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

οὗτος, τί ποιεῖς; ἄρα θαυμάζεις ὅτι
1165 οὕτω τὸ τεῖχος ἐκτετείχισται ταχύ;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νὴ τοὺς θεοὺς ἔγωγε· καὶ γὰρ ἄξιον·
ἴσα γὰρ ἀληθῶς φαίνεται μοι ψεύδεσιν.
ἀλλ' ὅδε φύλαξ γὰρ τῶν ἐκείθεν ἄγγελος
εἰσθεῖ πρὸς ἡμᾶς δεῦρο πυρρίχην βλέπων.

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Β΄

1170 ἰὸν ἰού, ἰὸν ἰού, ἰὸν ἰού.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί τὸ πρᾶγμα τουτί;

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Β΄

δεινότατα πεπόνθαμεν.
τῶν γὰρ θεῶν τις ἄρτι τῶν παρὰ τοῦ Διὸς
διὰ τῶν πυλῶν εἰσέπτατ' εἰς τὸν αἶρα,
λαθὼν κολιοιὺς φύλακας ἡμεροσκοπούς.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1175 ὦ δεινὸν ἔργον καὶ σχέτλιον εἰργασμένος.
τίς τῶν θεῶν;

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Β΄

οὐκ ἴσμεν· ὅτι δ' εἶχε πτερὰ,
τοῦτ' ἴσμεν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ οὐν δῆτα περιπόλους ἐχρήν
πέμψαι κατ' αὐτὸν εὐθύς;

BIRDS

CHORUS LEADER

Hey there, what's the matter? Amazed that the wall's been walled up so quickly?

PEISETAERUS

Heavens above, I certainly am; and rightly so. To tell the truth, it sounds like a mighty tall tale! But look, here's a guard coming on the run to report on events over there, looking like a war dancer.

Enter SECOND MESSENGER

SECOND MESSENGER

s.O.s! s.O.s! s.O.s!

PEISETAERUS

What's all this fuss?

SECOND MESSENGER

We've got terrible problems! One of the gods, Zeus' gods, has just now flown through the gates into our airspace, dodging the jackdaws, our daytime sentries.

PEISETAERUS

A dire deed defiantly done! Which one of the gods?

SECOND MESSENGER

We don't know; he had wings, we know that much.

PEISETAERUS

Then shouldn't you have sent a border patrol after him at once?

ARISTOPHANES

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Β΄

ἀλλ' ἐπέμψαμεν

τρισμυρίους ἰέρακας ἵπποτοξότας·

- 1180 χωρεῖ δὲ πᾶς τις ὄνυχας ἡγκυλωμένος,
κερχνῆς, τριόρχης, γύψ, κύμινδης, αἰετός·
ρύμη τε καὶ πτεροῖσι καὶ ῥοιζήμασιν
αἰθῆρ δονεῖται τοῦ θεοῦ ζητουμένου·
κάστ' οὐ μακρὰν ἄπωθεν, ἀλλ' ἐνταῦθά που
ἤδη ᾽στίν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

- 1185 οὐκοῦν σφενδόνας δεῖ λαμβάνειν
καὶ τόξα. χώρει δεῦρο πᾶς ὑπηρέτης·
τόξευε, παῖε· σφενδόνην τίς μοι δότω.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

- (στρ) πόλεμος αἴρεται, πόλεμος οὐ φατός,
1190/91 πρὸς ἐμὲ καὶ θεούς. ἀλλὰ φύλαττε πᾶς
ἀέρα περινέφελον, ὃν Ἑρεβος ἐτέκετο,
1195 μὴ σε λάθῃ θεῶν τις ταύτη περῶν.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

ἄθρει δὲ πᾶς κύκλω σκοπῶν·
ὥς ἐγγὺς ἤδη δαίμονος πεδαρσίου
δίνης πτερωτὸς φθόγγος ἐξακούεται.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

- αὕτη σύ, ποῖ ποῖ ποῖ πέτει; μέν' ἥσυχος,
1200 ἔχ' ἀτρέμας αὐτοῦ· στήθ'· ἐπίσχες τοῦ δρόμου.
τίς εἶ; ποδαπή; λέγειν ἐχρῆν ὀπόθεν ποτ' εἶ.

BIRDS

SECOND MESSENGER

We've done that, thirty thousand mounted archer hawks, and every bird with hooked talons is going along, kestrel, buzzard, vulture, great owl, eagle, and the sky's awhirl with the whirring of wings as the god's hunted down. And he's not far off; no, he's already somewhere nearby.

Exit SECOND MESSENGER

PEISETAERUS

Then shouldn't we be taking up slings and arrows? All support personnel fall in! Shoot and sling! Somebody give me a sling!

Enter Xanthias and Manes with the weapons.

CHORUS

War's broken out, war beyond words,
between me and the gods! Now everyone stand guard
on the cloud-girt air, scion of Erebus,
in case some god sneaks past you here unseen.

CHORUS LEADER

And everyone be alert on every side; the sound of an airborne god's whirring wings is already audible nearby.

IRIS appears aloft on the stage crane.

PEISETAERUS

You there! Where where where are you flying? Be still! Stay right where you are! Halt! Stop moving! Who are you? Where from? You'd better start explaining just where you're from!

ARISTOPHANES

ΙΡΙΣ

παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ἔγωγε τῶν Ὀλυμπίων.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄνομα δέ σοι τί; Πάραλος ἢ Σαλαμινία;

ΙΡΙΣ

Ἴρις ταχέϊα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

<πότερα> πλοῖον ἢ κύων;

ΙΡΙΣ

τί δὲ τοῦτο;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1205

ταυτηνί τις οὐ ξυλλήψεται
ἀναπτόμενος τρίορχος;

ΙΡΙΣ

ἐμὲ ξυλλήψεται;

τί ποτ' ἐστὶ τουτὶ τὸ κακόν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἰμῶξει μακρά.

ΙΡΙΣ

ἄτοπόν γε τουτὶ πρᾶγμα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κατὰ ποίας πύλας
εἰσῆλθες εἰς τὸ τείχος, ὦ μιαρωτάτη;

1203 τί; Πάραλος ἢ Σαλαμινία; Robert: τί ἐστι; πλοῖον ἢ
κυνῇ a S

BIRDS

IRIS¹¹²

From the gods I hail, the Olympian gods.

PEISETAERUS

And what's your name? Paralus or Salaminia?¹¹³

IRIS

Iris the Speedy.

PEISETAERUS

Boat or bitch?

IRIS

What is this?

PEISETAERUS

One of you cockerels, fly up and grab her!

IRIS

Grab me? What the hell is that supposed to mean?

PEISETAERUS

You're going to be awfully sorry!

IRIS

This is quite extraordinary.

PEISETAERUS

By what gate did you pass through the wall, you slut?

¹¹² Goddess of the rainbow and messenger of Zeus in epic and tragedy, but often rudely treated in satyr drama.

¹¹³ See 146 n.

¹²⁰⁴ <πότερα> πλοῖον ἢ κύων; Robert: Πάραλος ἢ Σαλαμινία a

ARISTOPHANES

ΙΡΙΣ

1210 οὐκ οἶδα μὰ Δί' ἔγωγε, κατὰ ποίας πύλας.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἤκουσας αὐτῆς οἶον εἰρωνεύεται;
πρὸς τοὺς κολοιάρχους προσῆλθες;

ΙΡΙΣ

πῶς λέγεις;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

σφραγίδ' ἔχεις παρὰ τῶν πελαργῶν;

ΙΡΙΣ

τί τὸ κακόν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἔλαβες;

ΙΡΙΣ

ὑγιαίνεις μέν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐδὲ σύμβολον

1215 ἐπέβαλεν ὀρνίθαρχος οὐδείς σοι παρών;

ΙΡΙΣ

μὰ Δί' οὐκ ἔμοιγ' ἐπέβαλεν οὐδείς, ὦ μέλε.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κᾶπειτα δῆθ' οὕτω σιωπῇ διαπέτει
διὰ τῆς πόλεως τῆς ἀλλοτρίας καὶ τοῦ χάους;

ΙΡΙΣ

ποία γὰρ ἄλλη χρὴ πέτεσθαι τοὺς θεούς;

BIRDS

IRIS

I have absolutely no idea what gate.

PEISETAERUS

Just listen to Miss Innocent! Did you accost the Duty Daws?

IRIS

I beg your pardon?

PEISETAERUS

Did the Storks punch your ticket?

IRIS

How dare you!

PEISETAERUS

You didn't accept a pass?

IRIS

You are sane, I trust?

PEISETAERUS

And no Top Cock was around to enter your passage?

IRIS

Listen, mister, nobody's entered me at all!

PEISETAERUS

And so you just fly in this stealthy way through a city that's not yours, and through the void?

IRIS

But where else are the gods supposed to fly?

¹²¹² προσῆλθες; : πῶς Bachmann: πῶς (del. t) προσῆλθες;
οὐ a

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

- 1220 οὐκ οἶδα μὰ Δί' ἔγωγε· τῇδε μὲν γὰρ οὔ.
ἀδικεῖς δὲ καὶ νῦν. ἄρά γ' οἶσθα τοῦθ' ὅτι
δικαιοτάτ' ἂν ληφθεῖσα πασῶν Ἰρίδων
ἀπέθανες, εἰ τῆς ἀξίας ἐτύγχανες;

ΙΡΙΣ

ἀλλ' ἀθάνατός εἰμ'.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὅμως ἂν ἀπέθανες.

- 1225 δεινότατα γάρ τοι πεισόμεσθ', ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ,
εἰ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων ἄρχομεν, ὑμεῖς δ' οἱ θεοὶ
ἀκολαστανεῖτε, κοῦδέπω γνώσεσθ' ὅτι
ἀκροατέον ὑμῖν ἐν μέρει τῶν κρειττόνων.
φράσον δέ μοι νῦν τὸ πτέρυγε ποῖ ναυστολεῖς;

ΙΡΙΣ

- 1230 ἐγὼ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους πέτομαι παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς
φράσουσα θύειν τοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις θεοῖς
μηλοσφαγεῖν τε βουθύτοις ἐπ' ἐσχάrais
κνισᾶν τ' ἀγυιάς.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί σὺ λέγεις; ποίοις θεοῖς;

ΙΡΙΣ

ποίοισιν; ἡμῖν, τοῖς ἐν οὐρανῷ θεοῖς.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

θεοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς;

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

I've absolutely no idea, but not through here. In fact, you're breaking the law right now. Do you realize that if you got what's coming to you, you'd deserve more than all other Irises to be captured and put to death?

IRIS

But I'm deathless!

PEISETAERUS

You'd be put to death anyway. Look here, we'll be in a terrible fix, the way I see it, if we're to be the rulers but you gods intend to misbehave and ignore the fact that it's now your turn to obey your superiors. So tell me right now where you're navigating those wings.

IRIS

I'll have you know I'm flying from the Father to mankind to deliver this message: give sacrifice to the Olympian gods; slaughter sheep on sacrificial altars; and fill the boulevards with their aromas.

PEISETAERUS

What do you mean? What gods?

IRIS

I mean us, the gods in heaven.

PEISETAERUS

So you're gods, eh?

1229 *μοι νῦν* Henderson: *τοί μοι α*

ARISTOPHANES

ΙΡΙΣ

1235

τίς γάρ ἐστ' ἄλλος θεός;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄρνιθες ἀνθρώποισι νῦν εἰσιν θεοί,
οἷς θυτέον αὐτούς, ἀλλὰ μὰ Δί' οὐ τῷ Δί.

ΙΡΙΣ

ὦ μῶρε, μῶρε, μὴ θεῶν κίνει φρένας
δεινάς, ὅπως μή σου γένος πανώλεθρον
1240 Διὸς μακέλλη πᾶν ἀναστρέψει Δίκη,
λιγνὺς δὲ σῶμα καὶ δόμων περιπτυχὰς
καταιθαλώσει σου Λικυμνίοις βολαῖς.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄκουσον, αὕτη· παῦε τῶν παφλασμάτων·
ἔχ' ἀτρέμα. φέρ' ἴδω, πότερα Λυδὸν ἢ Φρύγα
1245 ταυτὶ λέγουσα μορμολύττεσθαι δοκεῖς;
ἂρ' οἶσθ' ὅτι Ζεὺς εἴ με λυπήσει πέρα,
μέλαθρα μὲν αὐτοῦ καὶ δόμους Ἀμφίονος
καταιθαλώσω πυρφόροισιν αἰετοῖς,
πέμψω δὲ πορφυρίωνας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν
1250 ὄρνις ἐπ' αὐτὸν παρδαλᾶς ἐνημμένους
πλεῖν ἑξακοσίους τὸν ἀριθμόν; καὶ δὴ ποτε
εἰς Πορφυρίων αὐτῷ παρέσχε πράγματα.
σὺ δ' εἴ με λυπήσεις τι, τῆς διακόνου
πρώτης ἀνατείνας τὼ σκέλει διαμηριῶ
1255 τὴν Ἴριν αὐτήν, ὥστε θαυμάζειν ὅπως
οὔτω γέρων ὦν στύομαι τριέμβολον.

BIRDS

IRIS

Who else do you consider a god?

PEISETAERUS

Birds are gods to humans now, and to them must humans sacrifice, not, by Zeus, to Zeus!

IRIS

Ah fool, fool! Provoke not the terrible spleen of the gods, lest Justice wielding the Spade of Zeus utterly eradicate all your race; lest fiery fumes inflame your body and the enfolding embrace of your palace with thunderbolts Licymnian!¹¹⁴

PEISETAERUS

Hey listen, stop your spluttering! Whoa there! Say, do you think it's a Lydian or a Phrygian you're trying to spook with that kind of talk? Do you realize that if Zeus annoys me any further, I shall inflame his manse and the halls of Amphion with flame-throwing eagles,¹¹⁵ and I shall send into the sky against him porphyry birds clad in leopard skins,¹¹⁶ more than six hundred strong? And there was a time when just one Porphyryion caused him some trouble! And as for you, if you annoy me one bit, I'll deal with the servant girl first, Iris herself, spread her legs and screw her, and she'll be amazed how an old hulk like me can stay aloft for three ramblings!

¹¹⁴ According to scholia "a character in Euripides' *Licymnius* was thunderstruck," but no further details are known.

¹¹⁵ Adapted, according to scholia, from Aeschylus' *Niobe* (fr. 160); cf. also Sophocles *Antigone* 2 and 1155.

¹¹⁶ 553 n.; some painters thus depicted the Giants.

ARISTOPHANES

ΙΡΙΣ

διαρραγείης, ὦ μέλ', αὐτοῖς ῥήμασιν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἀποσοβήσεις; οὐ ταχέως; εὐράξ, πατάξ.

ΙΡΙΣ

ἦ μήν σε παύσει τῆς ὕβρεως οὐμὸς πατήρ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1260 οἴμοι τάλας. οὔκουν ἐτέρωσε πετομένη
καταιθαλώσεις τῶν νεωτέρων τινά;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(ἀντ) ἀποκεκλήκαμεν διογενεῖς θεοὺς
1265 μηκέτι τὴν ἐμὴν διαπερᾶν πόλιν,
μηδέ τιν' ἱερόθυτον ἀνὰ δάπεδον <ἐν> ἔτι
τῇδε βροτῶν θεοῖσι πέμπειν καπνόν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

δεινόν γε τὸν κήρυκα τὸν παρὰ τοὺς βροτοὺς
1270 οἰχόμενον, εἰ μηδέποτε νοστήσει πάλιν.

ΚΗΡΤΞ Α΄

ὦ Πεισέταιρ', ὦ μακάρι', ὦ σοφώτατε,
ὦ κλεινότατ', ὦ σοφώτατ', ὦ γλαφυρώτατε,
ὦ τρισμακάρι', ὦ—κατακέλευσον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί σὺ λέγεις;

1266 <ἐν> Dunbar praeunte Stahl

BIRDS

IRIS

Blast you, mister, you and your foul language!

PEISETAERUS

Buzz off now, and make it quick! Shoo, shoo!

IRIS

I swear my father will put a stop to your insolence!

PEISETAERUS

Good grief, fly somewhere else why don't you, and inflame some younger man.

IRIS flies off.

CHORUS

We have barred the gods sprung from Zeus
from any further passage through my city,
and no more shall any mortal on a single killing floor
send savory smoke to the gods by this route.

PEISETAERUS

It's terribly worrisome, the herald who went to mankind, if
he never comes back again.

Enter FIRST HERALD, holding a golden crown.

FIRST HERALD

Hail Peisetaerus, Hail the Blest One, Hail the Most Wise,
Hail the Most Illustrious, Hail the Most Wise, Hail the
Most Slick, Hail the Triple Blest, Hail the—just give me
my cue!

PEISETAERUS

What's your message?

ARISTOPHANES

ΚΗΡΤΞ Α΄

στεφάνω σε χρυσῶ τῷδε σοφίας οὔνεκα
1275 στεφανοῦσι καὶ τιμῶσιν οἱ πάντες λεῶ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

δέχομαι. τί δ' οὔτως οἱ λεῶ τιμῶσί με;

ΚΗΡΤΞ Α΄

ὦ κλεινοτάτην αἰθέριον οἰκίσας πόλιν,
οὐκ οἶσθ' ὅσην τιμὴν παρ' ἀνθρώποις φέρει
ὅσους τ' ἐραστὰς τῇσδε τῆς χώρας ἔχεις;
1280 πρὶν μὲν γὰρ οἰκίσαι σε τήνδε τὴν πόλιν,
ἐλακωνομάνουν ἅπαντες ἄνθρωποι τότε,
ἐκόμων, ἐπείνων, ἐρρύπων, ἐσωκράτων,
ἐσκυταλιοφόρουν· νῦν δ' ὑποστρέψαντες αὖ
ὀρνιθομανοῦσι, πάντα δ' ὑπὸ τῆς ἡδονῆς
1285 ποιοῦσιν ἅπερ ὀρνιθες ἐκμιμούμενοι.
πρῶτον μὲν εὐθὺς πάντες ἐξ εὐνῆς ἅμα
ἐπέτονθ' ἔωθεν ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς ἐπὶ νομόν·
κᾶπειτ' ἂν ἅμα κατῆραν εἰς τὰ βιβλία,
εἴτ' ἂν ἐνέμοντ' ἐνταῦθα τὰ ψηφίσματα.
1290 ὠρνιθομάνουν δ' οὔτω περιφανῶς ὥστε καὶ
πολλοῖσιν ὀρνίθων ὀνόματ' ἦν κείμενα.
Πέρδιξ μὲν εἰς κάπηλος ὠνομάζετο
χωλός, Μενίππῳ δ' ἦν Χελιδὼν τοῦνομα,
'Οπουντίῳ δ' ὀφθαλμὸν οὐκ ἔχων Κόραξ,
1295 Κορυδὸς Φιλοκλέει, Χηναλώπηξ Θεογένει,
Ἴβις Λυκούργῳ, Χαιρεφῶντι Νυκτερίς,
Συρακοσίῳ δὲ Κίττα· Μειδίας δ' ἐκεῖ

BIRDS

FIRST HERALD

With this crown of gold all the people recognize and reward you for your wisdom.

PEISETAERUS

I accept it. But why do the people honor me this way?

FIRST HERALD

O founder of the most glorious aetherial city, don't you realize how greatly you're esteemed among mankind, and how many of them you can count as lovers of this land? Why, before you built this city all men were crazy about the Spartans: they wore their hair long, went hungry, never bathed, acted like Socrates, brandished batons. But now they've about-faced and gone bird-crazy, and they're having a wonderful time imitating birds in everything they do. For starters, at the crack of dawn they all fly the coop together, just like us, to root for writs; then they flock to the archives and there sharpen their bills. They're so blatantly bird-crazy that many even had bird names added to their own. There's one lame barkeep called Partridge;¹¹⁷ Menippus took the name Swallow;¹¹⁸ Opuntius is the One-Eyed Raven; Philocles the Lark; Theogenes the Shel-drake;¹¹⁹ Lycurgus the Ibis;¹²⁰ Chaerephon the Bat;¹²¹ Syracosius the Jay;¹²² and Meidias is called Quail, and you

¹¹⁷ 766–68 n. ¹¹⁸ Unidentifiable. ¹¹⁹ Unidentifiable.

¹²⁰ Son of Lycomedes and grandfather of the homonymous fourth-century statesman; the nickname implies some connection with Egypt, cf. Cratinus fr. 32, Pherecrates fr. 11.

¹²¹ The associate of Socrates, often satirized as sallow, thin, and umbratile.

¹²² A politician ridiculed for his “barking” oratory (Eupolis fr. 220) and for legislating against comic poets (Phrynichus fr. 27).

ARISTOPHANES

- Ὅρνυξ ἐκαλεῖτο· καὶ γὰρ ἦκειν ὄρνυγι
 ὑπὸ στυφοκόπου τὴν κεφαλὴν πεπληγμένῳ.
 1300 ἦδον δ' ὑπὸ φιλορνηθίας πάντες μέλη,
 ὅπου χελιδὼν ἦν τις ἐμπεποιημένη
 ἢ πηνέλοψ ἢ χήν τις ἢ περιστερὰ
 ἢ πτέρυγες, ἢ πτεροῦ τι καὶ σμικρὸν προσῆν.
 τοιαῦτα μὲν τὰ κεῖθεν. ἐν δέ σοι λέγω·
 1305 ἥξουσ' ἐκεῖθεν δεῦρο πλείν ἢ μυρίοι
 πτερῶν δεόμενοι καὶ τρόπων γαμψωνύχων,
 ὥστε πτερῶν σοι τοῖς ἐποίκοις δεῖ ποθέν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

- οὐκ ἄρα μὰ Δί' ἡμῖν ἔτ' ἔργον ἐστάναι.
 ἀλλ' ὥς τάχιστα σὺ μὲν ἰὼν τὰς ἀρρίχους
 1310 καὶ τοὺς κοφίνους ἅπαντας ἐμπίμπλη πτερῶν·
 Μανῆς δὲ φερέτω μοι θύραζε τὰ πτερά·
 ἐγὼ δ' ἐκείνων τοὺς προσιόντας δέξομαι.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

- (στρ) ταχὺ δὴ πολυάνορα τάνδε πόλιν
 καλεῖ τις ἀνθρώπων·

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

- 1315 τύχη μόνον προσείη.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

- κατέχουσι δ' ἔρωτες ἐμᾶς πόλεως.

¹²³ A public official (Metagenes fr. 12) and avid bird fighter (Phrynichus fr. 43, Plato com. fr. 116); in the game of quail-

BIRDS

know he did look like a quail who'd been knocked on the head by a hard tapper.¹²³ And from sheer ornithophilia they're all singing songs with a swallow in the lyrics, or a duck, or a goose, or a pigeon, or wings, or just a bit of feather attached. So that's the situation down below. But I'll tell you one thing: more than ten thousand of them will be making the trip up here, wanting wings and a raptor's way of life. So somewhere you'll have to find wings for the new arrivals.

Exit FIRST HERALD.

PEISETAERUS

Then we certainly have no time to stand around. (*to Xanthias*) You go as quick as you can and fill all the hampers and baskets with wings, and have Manes bring the wings out here to me; I'll greet the visitors as they arrive.

Xanthias and Manes go inside; during the following duet Manes brings out basketsfull of wings.

CHORUS

Soon some human will be calling
this city very well-manned.

PEISETAERUS

Just so our luck holds.

CHORUS

Passion for my city grips the world.

tapping the bird's handler bet the tapper that his bird would stay in the ring, cf. Pollux 9.102, 109.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

θᾶπτον φέρειν κελεύω.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

τί γὰρ οὐκ ἔνι ταύτῃ

καλὸν ἀνδρὶ μετοικεῖν;

1320 Σοφία, Πόθος, ἀμβρόσιαι Χάριτες
τό τε τῆς ἀγανόφρονος Ἑσυχίας
εὐήμερον πρόσωπον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὥς βλακικῶς διακονεῖς.

οὐ θᾶπτον ἐγκονήσεις;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(ἀντ) φερέτω κάλαθον ταχύ τις πτερύγων.

1326 σὺ δ' αὖθις ἐξόρμα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τύπτων γε τοῦτον ὦδί.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

πάνυ γὰρ βραδύς ἐστί τις ὥσπερ ὄνος.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Μανῆς γάρ ἐστι δειλός.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

1330 σὺ δὲ τὰ πτερὰ πρῶτον

διάθες τάδε κόσμῳ·

τά τε μουνσίχ' ὁμοῦ τά τε μαντικά καὶ

τὰ θαλάττι'. ἔπειτα δ' ὅπως φρονίμως

πρὸς ἄνδρ' ὀρῶν πτερώσεις.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

(to *Manes*)

Faster with those wings, I say!

CHORUS

For is anything missing here
that's good for a settler to have?
We've Wisdom, Desire, immortal Graces,
and the happy countenance
of kindhearted Tranquillity.

PEISETAERUS

(to *Manes*)

That's pretty lazy service!
Speed it up there!

CHORUS

Quickly, a basket of wings over here;
tell him again to hurry.

PEISETAERUS

I will, by hitting him like this!

CHORUS

Yes, he's a slowpoke, slow as an ass.

PEISETAERUS

A good-for-nothing *Manes*!

CHORUS

But first you must arrange
these wings in proper order:
musical wings here, prophetic there,
and maritime, and then be sure you shrewdly
size up the man when you wing him.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

- 1335 οὐ τοι μὰ τὰς κερχνηῆδας ἔτι σου σχήσομαι,
οὕτως ὁρῶν σε δειλὸν ὄντα καὶ βραδύν.

ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ

<εἰ γὰρ> γενοίμαν αἰετὸς ὑψιπέτας,
ὥς ἀμποταθείην ὑπὲρ ἀτρυγέτου
γλαυκᾶς ἐπ' οἶδμα λίμνας.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

- 1340 ἔοικεν οὐ ψευδαγγελήσειν ἄγγελος·
ἄδων γὰρ ὅδε τις αἰετοὺς προσέρχεται.

ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ

- αἰβοῖ.
οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν τοῦ πέτεσθαι γλυκύτερον.
1343 [ἐρῶ δ' ἔγώ τι τῶν ἐν ὄρνισιν νόμων.]
ὀρνιθομανῶ γὰρ καὶ πέτομαι καὶ βούλομαι
1345 οἰκεῖν μεθ' ὑμῶν κἀπιθυμῶ τῶν νόμων.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ποίων νόμων; πολλοὶ γὰρ ὀρνίθων νόμοι.

ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ

πάντων· μάλιστα δ' ὅτι καλὸν νομίζεται
τὸν πατέρα τοῖς ὄρνισιν ἄγχειν καὶ δάκνειν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

- καὶ νῆ Δί' ἀνδρεῖόν γε πάνν νομίζομεν,
1350 ὃς ἂν πεπλήγη τὸν πατέρα νεοττὸς ὢν.

1337 <εἰ γὰρ> White

1338 ὑπὲρ] ὕπαρ Bergk

1343 del. Dobree, ab Ar. Byz. ad lacunam explendam

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

(to *Manes*) By the kestrels I swear you're in for it now; look how uselessly slow you are!

Manes runs into the house.

Enter *FATHER BEATER*.

FATHER BEATER

O to become a high-flying eagle
and soar beyond the barren pale
over the waves of the gray sea!¹²⁴

PEISETAERUS

That messenger's message looks to be accurate: here comes someone singing about eagles.

FATHER BEATER

Hi ho! Nothing's as much fun as flying! Yes, I'm bird-crazy, I'm on the wing, I want to live with you, I yearn for your laws.

PEISETAERUS

What laws do you mean? Birds have many laws.

FATHER BEATER

All of them! Especially the one where the birds think it's fine to peck and throttle your father.

PEISETAERUS

We do in fact consider a bird very manly who's beaten up his father while still a chick.

¹²⁴ From Sophocles' *Oenomaus* (fr. 476).

compositum indicare videtur ΣΥΕΓ: versum Pisitaeri excidissee
putat Kakridis, e.g. πτερῶν ἄρ' ἦκεις δεόμενος; φέρε νυν φράσον
Dunbar

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ

διὰ ταῦτα μέντοι δεῦρ' ἀνοικισθεῖς ἐγὼ
ἄγχειν ἐπιθυμῶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ πάντ' ἔχειν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἡμῖν τοῖσιν ὄρνισιν νόμος
παλαιὸς ἐν ταῖς τῶν πελαργῶν κύρβεσιν·
1355 “ἐπὴν ὁ πατήρ ὁ πελαργὸς ἐκπετησίμους
πάντας ποιήσῃ τοὺς πελαργιδέας τρέφων,
δεῖ τοὺς νεοττοὺς τὸν πατέρα πάλιν τρέφειν.”

ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ

ἀπέλαυσά γ' ἄρα νῆ Δί' ἐλθὼν ἐνθαδί,
εἴπερ γέ μοι καὶ τὸν πατέρα βοσκητέον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1360 οὐδέν γ'· ἐπειδήπερ γὰρ ἦλθες, ὦ μέλε,
εὖνους, πτερώσω σ' ὥσπερ ὄρνιν ὀρφανόν.
σοὶ δ', ὦ νεανίσκ', οὐ κακῶς ὑποθήσομαι,
ἀλλ' οἶάπερ αὐτὸς ἔμαθον ὅτε παῖς ἦ. σὺ γὰρ
τὸν μὲν πατέρα μὴ τύπτε, ταυτηνδὶ λαβὼν
1365 τὴν πτέρυγα καὶ τουτὶ τὸ πλήκτρον θάτέρα,
νομίσας ἀλεκτρύνονος ἔχειν τονδὶ λόφον,
φρούρει, στρατεύου, μισθοφορῶν σαντὸν τρέφε.
τὸν πατέρ' ἔα ζῆν. ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ μάχιμος εἶ,
εἰς τὰπὶ Θράκης ἀποπέτου κάκεῖ μάχου.

ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ

1370 νῆ τὸν Διόνυσον εὖ γέ μοι δοκεῖς λέγειν,
καὶ πείσομαί σοι.

BIRDS

FATHER BEATER

That's exactly why I yearn to immigrate here, to throttle my father and take all he has.

PEISETAERUS

But we birds have a law, an ancient one on the Storks' Tablets:¹²⁵ "When the father stork has provided for all his storklings and got them fully fledged, then the chicks must in their turn provide for their father."

FATHER BEATER

A fat lot of good it's done me coming here, if I'll even have to feed my father now!

PEISETAERUS

No, you won't. Seeing that you came here well disposed, my lad, I'm going to fit you with wings like an orphan bird. And young man, let me give you some pretty good advice, the sort of thing I myself was taught as a boy: don't beat your father. Instead, take this wing, and this spur in your other hand, and consider this crest your cockscomb. Now stand guard! Go on campaign! Work for a living! Let your father live his life! Since you want to fight, fly off to the Thracian front and fight there!¹²⁶

FATHER BEATER

By Dionysus, that does sound like good advice, and I'll follow it.

¹²⁵ Recalling the tablets in the Athenian agora on which were inscribed the laws of Draco and Solon; one of these concerned mistreatment of parents, cf. [Aristotle] *Constitution of the Athenians* 56.6.

¹²⁶ See Thucydides 7.9.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νοῦν ἄρ' ἔξεις νῆ Δία.

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

ἀναπέτομαι δὴ πρὸς Ὀλυμπον πτερύγεσσι κούφαις·
πέτομαι δ' ὁδὸν ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἄλλαν μελέων—

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1375 τουτὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα φορτίου δέϊται πτερῶν.

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

ἀφόβῳ φρενὶ σώματί τε νέαν ἐφέπων.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀσπαζόμεσθα φιλύρινον Κινησίαν.
τί δεῦρο πόδα σὺ κυλλὸν ἀνὰ κύκλον κυκλείς;

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

1380 ὄρνις γενέσθαι βούλομαι
λιγύφθογγος ἀηδών.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

παῦσαι μελωδῶν, ἀλλ' ὅ τι λέγεις εἶπέ μοι.

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

ὑπὸ σοῦ πτερωθεὶς βούλομαι μετάρσιος
ἀναπτόμενος ἐκ τῶν νεφελῶν καινὰς λαβεῖν
1385 ἀεροδονήτους καὶ νιφοβόλους ἀναβολάς.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐκ τῶν νεφελῶν γὰρ ἅν τις ἀναβολὰς λάβοι;

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

That's certainly the smart thing to do.

Exit FATHER BEATER

Enter CINESIAS.

CINESIAS¹²⁷

See, I soar up to Olympus on weightless wings,¹²⁸
I soar now on this path of song, and now on that—

PEISETAERUS

This here's going to take a whole load of wings!

CINESIAS

with fearless mind and body in quest of a new path.

PEISETAERUS

Our greetings to twiggy Cinesias! Why do you whirl your
bandy foot hither in a pirouette?

CINESIAS

I wish to become a bird,
a clear-voiced nightingale.

PEISETAERUS

Stop that vocalizing, and tell me what you're saying.

CINESIAS

I want wings from you, to fly on high and snatch from the
clouds fresh preludes air-propelled and snowswept.

PEISETAERUS

You're saying you can snatch preludes from the clouds?

¹²⁷ A tall, thin composer of dithyrambs in the avant-garde style noted for astrophic "preludes," musical complexity, elaborate language, and high emotionalism. ¹²⁸ From Anacreon fr. 378.

ARISTOPHANES

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

κρέμαται μὲν οὖν ἐντεῦθεν ἡμῶν ἡ τέχνη.
τῶν διθυράμβων γὰρ τὰ λαμπρὰ γίγνεται
ἀέρια καὶ σκοτεινὰ καὶ κυνανυγέα
1390 καὶ πτεροδόνητα· σὺ δὲ κλύων εἴσει τάχα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ δῆτ' ἔγωγε.

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

νῆ τὸν Ἡρακλέα σύ γε.
ἅπαντα γὰρ δίειμί σοι τὸν ἀέρα.
εἶδωλα πετηνῶν
αἰθεροδρόμων
οἰωνῶν ταναοδείρων—

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ῥόπ.

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

1395 ἀνάδρομος ἀλάμενος
ἄμ' ἀνέμων πνοαῖσι βαίην—

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Δί' ἧ ἴγώ σου καταπαύσω τὰς πνοάς.

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

τοτὲ μὲν νοτίαν στείχων πρὸς ὁδόν,
τοτὲ δ' αὖ βορέα σῶμα πελάζων
1400 ἀλίμενον αἰθέρος αὖλακα τέμνων—
χαρίεντά γ', ὦ πρεσβῦτ', ἐσοφίσω καὶ σοφά.

BIRDS

CINESIAS

Why, our whole art depends on them! In dithyrambs the dazzling bits are airy, dusky, darkly flashing, wing-propelled. Just listen, and you'll soon understand.

PEISETAERUS

I'd just as soon not.

CINESIAS

You absolutely must! Here, I'll run through the whole air for you:

Ah visions of wingéd
sky-coursing
long-necked birds—

PEISETAERUS

Whoa!

CINESIAS

oh to shoot up with a leap
and run with the breaths of the winds—

PEISETAERUS

So help me god, I'll put a stop to *your* breaths! (*chases Cinesias with a pair of wings*)

CINESIAS

(*dodging*)

first travelling a southerly course,
then swinging my body northwards,
cleaving a harborless furrow of sky—
(*stops, struck*) That's a very witty trick, old man, and tricky!

1395 ἀνάδρομος Henderson: τὸν ἀλάδρομον *vel sim.* a

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ γὰρ σὺ χαίρεις πτεροδόνητος γενόμενος;

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

ταυτὶ πεποίηκας τὸν κυκλιοδιδάσκαλον,
ὃς ταῖσι φυλαῖς περιμάχητός εἰμ' αἰεί;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1405 βούλει διδάσκειν καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν οὖν μένων
Λεωτροφίδη χορὸν πετομένων ὀρνέων
Κρεκοπίδα φυλήν;

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

καταγελᾶς μου, δῆλος εἶ.
ἀλλ' οὖν ἔγωγ' οὐ παύσομαι, τοῦτ' ἴσθ' ὅτι,
πρὶν ἂν πτερωθεῖς διαδράμω τὸν ἀέρα.

ΣΤΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

1410/11 ὄρνιθες τίνες οἶδ' οὐδὲν ἔχοντες πτεροποίκιλοι,
τανυσίπτερε ποικίλα χελιδοῖ;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τουτὶ τὸ κακὸν οὐ φαῦλον ἐξεγρήγορεν.
ὅδ' αὖ μινυρίζων δευρό τις προσέρχεται.

ΣΤΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

1415 τανυσίπτερε ποικίλα μάλ' αὖθις.

1407 Κρεκ- Kock: Κερκ- a

¹²⁹ For dithyrambic contests each of the ten Athenian tribes produced its own choruses.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

I thought you enjoy being wing-propelled!

CINESIAS

Is this how you treat me, the director of cyclic choruses whose services the tribes always fight for?¹²⁹

PEISETAERUS

Then would you like to stay here with us and serve as director for Leotrophides,¹³⁰ with a chorus of flying birds, of the Corncrake Tribe?¹³¹

CINESIAS

Obviously you're making fun of me. But I'll have you know I don't intend to stop, not until I get my wings and scamper through the air!

Exit CINESIAS.

Enter INFORMER, wearing a threadbare cloak.

INFORMER

Who are these birds, these have-nots with dappled wings?

O long-winged iridescent swallow!¹³²

PEISETAERUS

This is no small nuisance that's reared its head. Here comes another one warbling away.

INFORMER

I repeat, O long-winged iridescent!

¹³⁰ Ridiculed elsewhere as being very thin, like Cinesias.

¹³¹ Punning on the Athenian tribe name Cecropis.

¹³² Adapted from Alcaeus fr. 345.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

εἰς θοῖμάτιον τὸ σκόλιον ἄδειν μοι δοκεῖ,
δείσθαι δ' ἔοικεν οὐκ ὀλίγων χελιδόνων.

ΣΤΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

τίς ὁ πτερῶν δεῦρ' ἐστὶ τοὺς ἀφικνουμένους;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὁδὶ πάρεστιν· ἀλλ' ὅτου δεῖ χρὴ λέγειν.

ΣΤΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

1420 πτερῶν, πτερῶν δεῖ· μὴ πύθῃ τὸ δεύτερον.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μῶν εὐθὺ Πελλήνης πέτεσθαι διανοεῖ;

ΣΤΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

μὰ Δί', ἀλλὰ κλητήρ εἰμι νησιωτικὸς
καὶ συκοφάντης—

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ μακάριε τῆς τέχνης.

ΣΤΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

καὶ πραγματοποιίφης. εἶτα δέομαι πτερὰ λαβὼν
1425 κύκλῳ περισοβεῖν τὰς πόλεις καλούμενος.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὕπαὶ πτερύγων τι προσκαλεῖ σοφώτερον;

ΣΤΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

μὰ Δί', ἀλλ' ἵν' οἱ λησταί τε μὴ λυπῶσί με,

¹³³ Alluding to the proverb "one swallow does not a summer make."

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

I think he's singing that song about his cloak; he's likely to need more than a few swallows!¹³³

INFORMER

Who is it that gives wings to newcomers?

PEISETAERUS

That's me. But you must tell me what you need.

INFORMER

Its wings I want, wings! Do not ask me twice.¹³⁴

PEISETAERUS

You don't intend to fly straight to Pellene, do you?¹³⁵

INFORMER

God no; I'm a subpoena server working the islands, and an informer—

PEISETAERUS

What a glorious profession!

INFORMER

—and a lawsuit snoop. So I want to get wings and buzz around the islands serving subpoenas.

PEISETAERUS

Will you subpoena them any more efficiently with wingpower?

INFORMER

God no, it's so the bandits don't jump me, and so I can

¹³⁴ From Aeschylus' *Myrmidons* (fr. 140), substituting "wings" for "weapons."

¹³⁵ A Peloponnesian city where warm cloaks were awarded as prizes in chariot races; currently on hostile terms with Athens.

ARISTOPHANES

μετὰ τῶν γεράνων τ' ἐκείθεν ἀναχωρῶ πάλιν,
ἀνθ' ἔρματος πολλὰς καταπεπωκὼς δίκας.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1430 τουτὶ γὰρ ἐργάζει σὺ τοῦργον; εἶπέ μοι,
νεανίας ὦν συκοφαντεῖς τοὺς ξένους;

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

τί γὰρ πάθω; σκάπτειν γὰρ οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἕτερα νῆ Δί' ἔργα σώφρονα,
ἀφ' ὧν διαζῆν ἄνδρα χρῆν τοσουντὸν
1435 ἐκ τοῦ δικαίου μᾶλλον ἢ δικορραφεῖν.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

ὦ δαιμόνιε, μὴ νουθέτει μ', ἀλλὰ πτέρου.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νῦν τοι λέγων πτερῶ σε.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

καὶ πῶς ἂν λόγοις
ἄνδρα πτερώσειας σύ;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πάντες τοι λόγοις
ἀναπτεροῦνται.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

πάντες;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἀκήκοας,

BIRDS

make the return trip with the cranes, once I've filled up on lots of lawsuits for ballast.

PEISETAERUS

So that's your line of work, is it? An able-bodied young man like yourself informing on foreigners for a living?

INFORMER

But what am I supposed to do? I don't know how to use a shovel.

PEISETAERUS

But surely there are other respectable occupations, where a man your size should be making an honest living instead of cobbling up lawsuits.

INFORMER

Listen, mister, don't lecture me, just wing me.

PEISETAERUS

Know what? I'm winging you now, just by talking.

INFORMER

And just how can you wing a man with mere words?

PEISETAERUS

Words, you see, set everyone aflutter.

INFORMER

Everyone?

PEISETAERUS

Haven't you been in the barber shops and heard boys'

ARISTOPHANES

- 1440 ὅταν λέγωσιν οἱ πατέρες ἐκάστοτε
τῶν μειρακίων ἐν τοῖσι κουρείοις ταδί·
“δεινῶς γέ μου τὸ μειράκιον Διειτρέφης
λέγων ἀνεπτέρωκεν ὥσθ’ ἱππηλατεῖν”;
ὁ δέ τις τὸν αὐτοῦ φησιν ἐπὶ τραγωδία
1445 ἀνεπτερώσθαι καὶ πεποτῆσθαι τὰς φρένας.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

λόγοισί γ’ ἄρα καὶ πτεροῦνται;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

φήμ’ ἐγώ.

ὑπὸ γὰρ λόγων ὁ νοῦς τε μετεωρίζεται
ἐπαίρεται τ’ ἄνθρωπος. οὕτω καὶ σ’ ἐγὼ
ἀναπτερώσας βούλομαι χρηστοῖς λόγοις
τρέψαι πρὸς ἔργον νόμιμον.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

- 1450 ἄλλ’ οὐ βούλομαι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δαὶ ποιήσεις;

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

τὸ γένος οὐ καταισχυνῶ.

- παππῶος ὁ βίος συκοφαντεῖν ἐστί μοι.
ἀλλὰ πτέρου με ταχέσι καὶ κούφοις πτεροῖς
ἰέρακος ἢ κερχνηῆδος, ὥς ἂν τοὺς ξένους
1455 καλεσάμενος κᾶτ’ ἐγκεκληκῶς ἐνθαδὶ
κατ’ αὖ πέτωμαι πάλιν ἐκείσε.

BIRDS

fathers say, "It's terrible how Dieitrephes has been talking to my boy and setting him all aflutter for horse racing!" And someone else says that his boy's mind has gone all aflutter for tragedy and flown the coop.

INFORMER

So they actually get wings from words?

PEISETAERUS

That's right: by words is the mind uplifted and a person transported. That's just how I want to set you aflutter too: with worthwhile words to convert you to legitimate work.

INFORMER

But that's not what I want.

PEISETAERUS

Then what do you intend to do?

INFORMER

I'll not disgrace my family: informing has been our livelihood since my grandfather's day. Just rig me with the light, fast wings of a hawk or a kestrel, so I can subpoena the foreigners, get a judgment here, then fly back there again.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μανθάνω.

ὥδι λέγεις· ὅπως ἂν ὠφλήκη δίκην
ἐνθάδε πρὶν ἤκειν ὁ ξένος.

ΣΤΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

πάνυ μανθάνεις.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κ᾿απειθ' ὁ μὲν πλεῖ δεῦρο, σὺ δ' ἐκείσ' αὖ πέτει
ἄρπασόμενος τὰ χρήματ' αὐτοῦ.

ΣΤΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

1460

πάντ' ἔχεις.

βέμβικος οὐδὲν διαφέρειν δεῖ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μανθάνω

βέμβικα. καὶ μὴν ἔστι μοι, νῆ τὸν Δία,
κάλλιστα Κορκυραῖα τοιαντὶ πτερὰ.

ΣΤΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

οἴμοι τάλας, μάστιγ' ἔχεις.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πτερὸ μὲν οὖν,

1465

οἷσί σε ποιήσω τήμερον βεμβικιᾶν.

ΣΤΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

οἴμοι τάλας.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ πτερυγιεῖς ἐντευθενί;
οὐκ ἀπολιβάξεις, ὦ κάκιστ' ἀπολούμενος;

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

I get it: you mean the foreigner's case will be lost by default before he gets here.

INFORMER

Quite right.

PEISETAERUS

And then while he's sailing here, you're flying back there to snatch his property.

INFORMER

That's the whole story. It means whizzing around just like a top.

PEISETAERUS

A top—I know what you mean. (*rummaging*) And by god I've actually got some wings here that'll do just perfectly; they're from Corcyra.¹³⁶

INFORMER

Good grief, that's a whip!

PEISETAERUS

No, a pair of wings; I'll use them this very day to make you whizz around like a top!

INFORMER

Good grief!

Exit INFORMER on the run.

PEISETAERUS

Now flutter away from here! Clear off! Goddamned pest!

¹³⁶ Well known for the manufacture of double-thonged whips.

πικρὰν τάχ' ὄψει στρεψοδικοπανουργίαν.
ἀπίωμεν ἡμεῖς ξυλλαβόντες τὰ πτερὰ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(στρ) πολλὰ δὴ καὶ καινὰ καὶ θαν-

1471 μάστ' ἐπεπτόμεσθα καὶ
δεινὰ πράγματ' εἶδομεν.

ἔστι γὰρ δένδρον πεφυκὸς
ἔκτοπόν τι Καρδίας ἀ-

1475 πωτέρω Κλεώνυμος,
χρήσιμον μὲν οὐδέν, ἄλ-
λως δὲ δειλὸν καὶ μέγα.

τοῦτο τοῦ μὲν ἥρος ἀεὶ
βλαστάνει καὶ συκοφαντεῖ,

1480 τοῦ δὲ χειμῶνος πάλιν τὰς
ἀσπίδας φυλλορροεῖ.

(ἀντ) ἔστι δ' αὖ χώρα πρὸς αὐτῷ

τῷ σκότῳ πόρρῳ τις ἐν
τῇ λύχνων ἐρημία,

1485 ἔνθα τοῖς ἥρωσιν ἄνθρω-
ποι ξυναριστῶσι καὶ ξύν-
εισι πλὴν τῆς ἐσπέρας.

τηνικαῦτα δ' οὐκέτ' ἦν
ἀσφαλὲς ξυντυγχάνειν.

1490 εἰ γὰρ ἐντύχοι τις ἥρῳ
τῶν βροτῶν νύκτωρ Ὀρέστη,
γυμνὸς ἦν πληγεὶς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ
πάντα τὰπιδέξια.

BIRDS

You'll soon get a bitter dose of sleazy shysterism! (*to Slaves*) Come on, let's gather up these wings and go.

PEISETAERUS and Slaves go inside.

CHORUS

Many wondrous novelties
have we overflown, and
many amazements have we seen.
There's a tree, quite exotic,
that grows beyond Wimpdom,
and it's called Cleonymus,
good for nothing, but otherwise
voluminous and yellow.
Each and every springtime
it sprouts denunciations,
while in wintertime, by contrast,
its shields drop off like leaves.

Then there's a far-off country,
at the very edge of darkness
in the lampless steppes,
where people meet the heroes
for lunch and conversation,
except in the evening:
that's when it's no longer
safe to meet them.

For if any mortal happened
to run into the hero Orestes,
he'd get stripped and paralyzed
all down his right-hand side.

Enter PROMETHEUS, muffled and carrying a parasol.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

οἷμοι τάλας, ὁ Ζεὺς ὅπως μή μ' ὄψεται.
ποῦ Πεισέταιρος ἔστ';

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1495 ἔα, τουτὶ τί ἦν;
τίς ὁ συγκαλυμμός;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

τῶν θεῶν ὁρᾶς τινα
ἐμοῦ κατόπιν ἐνταῦθα;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μὰ Δί' ἐγὼ μὲν οὔ.
τίς δ' εἶ σύ;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

πηνίκ' ἐστὶν ἄρα τῆς ἡμέρας;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὀπηνίκα; σμικρόν τι μετὰ μεσημβρίας.
ἀλλὰ σὺ τίς εἶ;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

1500 βουλυτός, ἣ περαιτέρω;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἷμ', ὥς βδελύττομαί σε.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

τί γὰρ ὁ Ζεὺς ποιεῖ;
ἀπαιθριάζει τὰς νεφέλας ἢ ξυννέφει;

BIRDS

PROMETHEUS

Oh what a fix! Zeus mustn't see me! Where's Peisetaerus?

PEISETAERUS emerges, carrying a potty.

PEISETAERUS

Yipes, what is this? What's this mufflement?

PROMETHEUS

Do you see any of the gods back there behind me?

PEISETAERUS

I certainly can't see any. But who are you?

PROMETHEUS

Then what's the time of day?

PEISETAERUS

The time? A little after midday. But who are you?

PROMETHEUS

Quitting time, or later?

PEISETAERUS

Damn it, I'm getting sick of this!

PROMETHEUS

And what's Zeus doing? Is he clearing the clouds away, or gathering them?

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἴμωζε μεγάλ'.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

οὔτω μὲν ἐκκεκαλύψομαι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ φίλε Προμηθεῦ.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

παῦε παῦε, μὴ βόα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί γάρ ἐστι;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

1505

σίγα, μὴ κάλει μου τοὔνομα·
ἀπὸ γάρ μ' ὀλεῖς, εἴ μ' ἐνθάδ' ὁ Ζεὺς ὄψεται.
ἀλλ' ἵνα φράσω σοι πάντα τᾶνω πράγματα,
τουτὶ λαβὼν μου τὸ σκιάδειον ὑπέρεχε,
ἄνωθεν ὡς ἂν μή μ' ὀρώσιν οἱ θεοί.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1510

ιοὺν ἰού·
εὖ γ' ἐπενόησας αὐτὸ καὶ προμηθικῶς.
ὑπόδυθι ταχὺ δὴ κᾶτα θαρρήσας λέγε.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

ἄκουε δὴ νυν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὡς ἀκούοντος λέγε.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

ἀπόλωλεν ὁ Ζεὺς.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Go straight to hell!

PROMETHEUS

In that case, I'll get unmuffled.

PEISETAERUS

Prometheus, old friend!¹³⁷

PROMETHEUS

Shh, shh! Don't shout!

PEISETAERUS

Why, what's up?

PROMETHEUS

Be quiet, don't mention my name. You'll be the death of me, if Zeus sees me here. Look, I'm going to tell you everything that's going on up there, so take this parasol and hold it over me, so the gods above won't see me.

PEISETAERUS

Aha! That was good thinking, positively Promethean. Quick, get under here, and speak freely.

PROMETHEUS

Then listen to this.

PEISETAERUS

Go on, I'm listening.

PROMETHEUS

Zeus is finished!

¹³⁷ Prometheus was worshipped at Athens as a fire god and patron of craftsmen.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πηνίκ' ἄττ' ἀπώλετο;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

- 1515 ἐξ οὐπερ ὑμεῖς ᾠκίσατε τὸν αέρα.
 θύει γὰρ οὐδεὶς οὐδὲν ἀνθρώπων ἔτι
 θεοῖσιν, οὐδὲ κνῖσα μηρίων ἄπο
 ἀνῆλθεν ὡς ἡμᾶς ἀπ' ἐκείνου τοῦ χρόνου,
 ἀλλ' ὥσπερ εἰ Θεσμοφορίοις νηστεύομεν
 1520 ἄνευ θυηλῶν· οἱ δὲ βάρβαροι θεοὶ
 πεινῶντες ὥσπερ Ἴλλυριοὶ κεκριγότες
 ἐπιστρατεύσειν φάσ' ἄνωθεν τῷ Δί,
 εἰ μὴ παρέξει τὰμπόρι' ἀνεωγμένα,
 ἵν' εἰσάγοιτο σπλάγχνα κατατετμημένα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

- 1525 εἰσὶν γὰρ ἕτεροι βάρβαροι θεοὶ τινες
 ἄνωθεν ὑμῶν;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

οὐ γάρ εἰσι βάρβαροι,
 ὅθεν ὁ πατρῷός ἐστιν Ἐξηκεστίδης;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄνομα δὲ τούτοις τοῖς θεοῖς τοῖς βαρβάροις
 τί ἐστιν;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

ὅ τι ἐστίν; Τριβαλλοί.

1527 -ίδη Brunck: -ίδης a

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

And approximately when was he finished?

PROMETHEUS

From the very moment you colonized the air. Now not a single human sacrifices to the gods any more, and since then not a whiff of thigh bones has wafted up to us; no, without burnt offerings we're as good as fasting at the Thesmophoria.¹³⁸ And the barbarian gods are so hungry they're shrieking like Illyrians and threatening to march down against Zeus¹³⁹ unless he gets the trading posts re-opened so they can import their ration of innards.

PEISETAERUS

So there are some other gods, barbarians, up-country from you?

PROMETHEUS

How could we have no barbarians? That's where Execestides gets his ancestral god.

PEISETAERUS

And what's the name of these barbarian gods?

PROMETHEUS

Their name? Triballians.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ For this festival see *Women at the Thesmophoria*, Introductory Note.

¹³⁹ Like an indigenous populace against colonists on the coast.

¹⁴⁰ A Thracian tribe allied with Athens and noted for their savagery.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μανθάνω.

1530 ἐντεῦθεν ἄρα τοῦπιτριβείης ἐγένετο.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

μάλιστα πάντων. ἐν δέ σοι λέγω σαφές·
 ἥξουσι πρέσβεις δεῦρο περὶ διαλλαγῶν
 παρὰ τοῦ Διὸς καὶ τῶν Τριβαλλῶν τῶν ἄνω·
 ὑμεῖς δὲ μὴ σπένδεσθ', ἐὰν μὴ παραδιδῶ
 1535 τὸ σκῆπτρον ὃ Ζεὺς τοῖσιν ὄρνισιν πάλιν,
 καὶ τὴν Βασίλειαν σοὶ γυναικ' ἔχειν διδῶ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τίς ἐστὶν ἡ Βασίλεια;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

καλλίστη κόρη,
 ἥπερ ταμιεύει τὸν κεραυνὸν τοῦ Διὸς
 καὶ τᾶλλ' ἀπαξάπαντα, τὴν εὐβουλίαν,
 1540 τὴν εὐνομίαν, τὴν σωφροσύνην, τὰ νεώρια,
 τὴν λοιδορίαν, τὸν κωλακρέτην, τὰ τριώβολα.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἅπαντά γ' ἄρ' αὐτῷ ταμιεύει;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

φήμ' ἐγώ.
 ἥ γ' ἦν σὺ παρ' ἐκείνου παραλάβης, πάντ' ἔχεις.
 τούτων ἔνεκα δεῦρ' ἦλθον, ἵνα φράσαιμί σοι
 1545 αἰεί ποτ' ἀνθρώποις γὰρ εὖνους εἴμ' ἐγώ.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

I get it; that must be where "balls to you" comes from.

PROMETHEUS

Altogether likely. But I'll tell you one thing for sure: ambassadors will be coming here about a settlement, from Zeus and the Triballians up-country. But don't you ratify a treaty unless Zeus returns his scepter to the birds and gives you Princess for your bride.

PEISETAERUS

Who's this Princess?

PROMETHEUS

A most beautiful maiden, who looks after Zeus' thunderbolt and everything else too: good counsel, law and order, decency, shipyards, mudslinging, paymasters, three-obol fees.

PEISETAERUS

You mean she looks after everything for him?

PROMETHEUS

That's right: win her from him and you'll have it all. That's why I came here, to let you in on this. I've always been a friend to humanity.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μόνον θεῶν γὰρ διὰ σ' ἀπανθρακίζομεν.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

μισῶ δ' ἅπαντας τοὺς θεούς, ὥς οἶσθα σύ—

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νὴ τὸν Δί' αἰὲ δῆτα θεομισῆς ἔφης,
Τίμων καθαρός.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

ἀλλ' ὥς ἂν ἀποτρέχω πάλιν

1550 φέρε τὸ σκιάδειον, ἵνα με κἂν ὁ Ζεὺς ἴδῃ
ἄνωθεν, ἀκολουθεῖν δοκῶ κανηφόρῳ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ τὸν δίφρον γε διφροφόρει τονδὶ λαβών.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(στρ) πρὸς δὲ τοῖς Σκιάποσιν λί-
μνη τις ἔστ', ἄλουτος οὖ

1555 ψυχαγωγεῖ Σωκράτης.
ἔνθα καὶ Πείσανδρος ἦλθε
δεόμενος ψυχὴν ἰδεῖν ἥ
ζῶντ' ἐκείνον προὔλιπε,
σφάγι' ἔχων κάμηλον ἀ-

¹⁴¹ The proverbial Athenian misanthrope.

¹⁴² A maiden chosen for this honor in a religious procession might be accompanied by assistants bearing a parasol and a stool.

¹⁴³ Recalling Odysseus' visit to the underworld as described

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Yes, if it weren't for you we wouldn't have barbecues.

PROMETHEUS

And I hate all the gods, as you know.

PEISETAERUS

Yes, you've always been on hateful terms with the gods, an absolute Timon.¹⁴¹

PROMETHEUS

But now I've got to run back again, so give me my parasol; this way, even if Zeus does see me from up there, he'll think I'm attending a basket bearer.¹⁴²

PEISETAERUS

(*handing him the potty*) You may as well carry her stool too; here it is.

Exit PROMETHEUS; PEISETAERUS goes inside.

CHORUS¹⁴³

Far away by the Shadefoots
lies a swamp, where all unwashed
Socrates conjures spirits.
Pisander¹⁴⁴ paid a visit there,
asking to see the spirit
that deserted him in life.
For sacrifice he brought a baby

in *Odyssey* 11 and dramatized in Aeschylus' *Spirit Conjurers* (*Psychagogoi*), cf. its fr. 273a.

¹⁴⁴ A general and democratic politician, later turned oligarch (see *Lysistrata*, Introductory Note); ridiculed elsewhere for cowardice (Eupolis fr. 35, Xenophon *Symposium* 2.14).

ARISTOPHANES

- 1560 μνόν τιν', ἧς λαιμοὺς τεμῶν
 ὥσπερ οὐδυσσεὺς ἀπῆλθε,
 κᾶτ' ἀνῆλθ' αὐτῷ κάτωθεν
 πρὸς τὸ λαῖμα τῆς καμήλου
 Χαιρεφῶν ἢ νυκτερίς.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

- 1565 τὸ μὲν πόλισμα τῆς Νεφελοκοκκυγίας
 ὁρᾶν τοδὶ πάρεστιν, οἱ πρεσβεύομεν.
 οὔτος, τί δρᾷς; ἐπαρίστερ' οὕτως ἀμπέχει;
 οὐ μεταβαλεῖς θοῖμάτιον ὧδ' ἐπιδέξια;
 τί, ὦ κακόδαιμον; Λαισποδίας εἰ τὴν φύσιν;
 1570 ὦ δημοκρατία, ποῖ προβιβᾷς ἡμᾶς ποτε,
 εἰ τουτονγί γ' ἐχειροτόνησαν οἱ θεοί;
 ἔξεις ἀτρέμας; οἴμωζε· πολὺ γὰρ δὴ σ' ἐγὼ
 ἑώρακα πάντων βαρβαρώτατον θεῶν.
 ἄγε δὴ, τί δρώμεν, Ἡράκλεις;

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἀκήκοας

- 1575 ἐμοῦ γ', ὅτι τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἄγχειν βούλομαι,
 ὅστις ποτ' ἔσθ' ὁ τοὺς θεοὺς ἀποτειχίσας.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

ἀλλ', ὦγάθ', ἡρήμεσθα περὶ διαλλαγῶν
 πρέσβεις.

1563 πρὸς τὸ λαῖμα cett. S^{rel} Σ^{rel}, cf. S λ 185 λαῖμα· τὸ αἶμα:
 πρὸς τὸ λαῖτμα V S^A λΣ^R: πρὸς τὸ δέρμα γρΣ^{REM}Γ: πρὸς τε
 θαῖμα Henderson

BIRDS

camel and cut its throat,
like Odysseus, then backed off;
and up from below arose to him,
drawn by the camel's gore,
Chaerephon the bat.

Enter POSEIDON, HERACLES, and TRIBALLIAN GOD.

POSEIDON

This municipality now present to our view is Cloud-cuckooland, the goal of our embassy. (*to Triballian*) Here, what do you think you're doing, draping your cloak like that, from right to left? Please reverse it, this way, from left to right. Oh, you sorry bungler! Are you built like Laespodias?¹⁴⁵ Ah democracy, what will you bring us to in the end, if the gods can elect this person ambassador? (*adjusting Triballian's cloak*) Please hold still! To hell with you! You're the most barbaric god I've ever laid eyes on. Well now, Heracles, what should we do?

HERACLES

You've heard *my* opinion: I want to strangle the guy, whoever he is, that's blockaded the gods.

POSEIDON

Listen, colleague, our charge is to discuss a settlement.

¹⁴⁵ A politician, probably elected general shortly before *Birds*, who presumably tried to hide misshapen calves by draping his cloak very low.

ARISTOPHANES

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

διπλασίως μάλλον ἄγχειν μοι δοκεῖ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὴν τυρόκνηστίν τις δότω· φέρε σίλφιον·

1580 τυρὸν φερέτω τις· πυρπόλει τοὺς ἄνθρακας.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

τὸν ἄνδρα χαίρειν οἱ θεοὶ κελεύομεν

τρέις ὄντες ἡμεῖς.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄλλ' ἐπικνῶ τὸ σίλφιον.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

τὰ δὲ κρέα τοῦ ταῦτ' ἐστίν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄρνιθές τινες

ἐπανιστάμενοι τοῖς δημοτικοῖσιν ὀρνέοις

ἔδοξαν ἀδικεῖν.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

1585 εἶτα δῆτα σίλφιον

ἐπικνῆς πρότερον αὐτοῖσιν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ χαῖρ', Ἡράκλεις.

τί ἐστι;

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

πρεσβεύοντες ἡμεῖς ἤκομεν

παρὰ τῶν θεῶν περὶ πολέμου καταλλαγῆς.

BIRDS

HERACLES

All the more reason to strangle him, if you ask me.

Enter PEISETAERUS and Slaves, with brazier, table, and cooking utensils.

PEISETAERUS

Someone hand me the cheese grater. Pass the silphium.
Someone get the cheese. Poke up these coals.

POSEIDON

We bid the gentleman greetings, a committee of three gods.

PEISETAERUS

Wait, I'm grating silphium on this.

HERACLES

And what sort of meat is that?¹⁴⁶

PEISETAERUS

Some birds who've been convicted of attempted rebellion against the bird democracy.

HERACLES

So that's why you're grating silphium on them first?

PEISETAERUS

Oh, hello, Heracles. What's up?

POSEIDON

We have come as ambassadors from the gods to discuss an end to the war.

¹⁴⁶ Heracles traditionally had an insatiable appetite.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔλαιον οὐκ ἔνεστιν ἐν τῇ ληκύθῳ.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

1590 καὶ μὴν τά γ' ὀρνίθεια λιπάρ' εἶναι πρέπει.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

ἡμεῖς τε γὰρ πολεμοῦντες οὐ κερδαίνομεν,
 ὑμεῖς τ' ἂν ἡμῖν τοῖς θεοῖς ὄντες φίλοι
 ὄμβριον ὕδωρ ἂν εἴχετ' ἐν τοῖς τέλμασιν,
 ἀλκονοίδας τ' ἂν ἤγεθ' ἡμέρας αἰεί.

1595 τούτων πέρι πάντων αὐτοκράτορες ἥκομεν.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' οὔτε πρότερον πώποθ' ἡμεῖς ἥρξαμεν
 πολέμου πρὸς ὑμᾶς, νῦν τ' ἐθέλομεν, εἰ δοκεῖ,
 εἰάν τὸ δίκαιον ἀλλὰ νῦν ἐθέλητε δρᾶν,
 σπονδὰς ποιεῖσθαι. τὰ δὲ δίκαι' ἐστὶν ταδί·
 1600 τὸ σκῆπτρον ἡμῖν τοῖσιν ὄρνισιν πάλιν
 τὸν Δί' ἀποδοῦναι· κὰν διαλλαττώμεθα
 ἐπὶ τοῖσδε, τοὺς πρέσβεις ἐπ' ἄριστον καλῶ.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἐμοὶ μὲν ἀποχρῆ ταῦτα, καὶ ψηφίζομαι.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

τί, ὦ κακόδαιμον; ἡλίθιος καὶ γάστρις εἶ.

1605 ἀποστερεῖς τὸν πατέρα τῆς τυραννίδος;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄληθες; οὐ γὰρ μείζον ὑμεῖς οἱ θεοὶ
 ἰσχύσετ', ἣν ὄρνιθες ἄρξωσιν κάτω;

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

There's no oil in the bottle.

HERACLES

And bird meat should be glistening with it.

POSEIDON

For we gods are gaining nothing by the war; while for your part, friendly relations with the gods would win you rain-water for your puddles and halcyon days to enjoy year round. On all these issues we are authorized to ratify an agreement.

PEISETAERUS

But it was never our side that initiated hostilities against you, and we are now ready to ratify a treaty, if you like, as long as you're ready even at this late hour to do what's right. And what's right amounts to this: Zeus returns the sceptre back to us birds. If we can reach an agreement on these terms, I invite the embassy to lunch.

HERACLES

That's good enough for me; I vote aye.

POSEIDON

You what, you damned fool? You're an idiotic greedy-guts. Would you rob your father of his rule?

PEISETAERUS

How can you say that? Won't you gods actually have greater power if birds are sovereign down below? At pres-

1598 τὸ Elmsley cl. Σ: τι a

ARISTOPHANES

νῦν μὲν γ' ὑπὸ ταῖς νεφέλαισιν ἐγκεκρυμμένοι
κύψαντες ἐπιорκοῦσιν ὑμᾶς οἱ βροτοί·

1610 ἔαν δὲ τοὺς ὄρνις ἔχητε συμμάχους,
ὅταν ὁμνύῃ τις τὸν κόρακα καὶ τὸν Δία,
ὁ κόραξ παρελθὼν τοῦπιорκοῦντος λάθρα
προσπτάμενος ἐκκόψει τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν θενών.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

νῆ τὸν Ποσειδῶ ταῦτά γέ τοι καλῶς λέγεις.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

κάμοι δοκεῖ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δαὶ σὺ φῆς;

ΤΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΣ

1615 νὰ Βαισατρεῦ.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ὁρᾶς, ἐπαινεῖ χούτος.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἕτερόν νυν ἔτι

ἀκούσαθ' ὅσον ὑμᾶς ἀγαθὸν ποιήσομεν.

ἔάν τις ἀνθρώπων ἱερεῖόν τῳ θεῶν

εὐξάμενος εἶτα διασοφίζεται λέγων·

1620 “μενετοὶ θεοί”, καὶ μάποδιδῶ μισητία,
ἀναπράξομεν καὶ ταῦτα.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

φέρ' ἴδω τῷ τρόπῳ;

BIRDS

ent, mortals can hide beneath the clouds, and with bowed heads swear false oaths in your names; but if you have the birds for allies, whenever anyone swears “by the Raven and by Zeus,” the Raven will happen by and swoop down on that perjurer before he knows it, and peck out his eye like a shot.

POSEIDON

By Poseidon, that’s a very good point.

HERACLES

I agree.

PEISETAERUS

And what do you say?

TRIBALLIAN GOD

Yeah Bubba.

HERACLES

See? He’s in favor too.

PEISETAERUS

Now listen to what else we’ll do for your benefit. If a human vows an offering to a god and then tries to squirm out of it with a sophism like “the gods are patient,”¹⁴⁷ and out of avarice doesn’t fulfill it, we’ll make him pay up.

POSEIDON

I’d like to know how.

¹⁴⁷ The full proverb was “the gods are patient, but keep their promises.”

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὅταν διαριθμῶν ἀργυρίδιον τύχη
 ἄνθρωπος οὗτος, ἣ καθήται λούμενος,
 καταπτάμενος ἰκτῖνος ἀρπάσας λάθρα
 1625 προβάτοιιν δυοῖν τιμὴν ἀνοίσει τῷ θεῷ.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

τὸ σκῆπτρον ἀποδοῦναι πάλιν ψηφίζομαι
 τούτοις ἐγώ.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

καὶ τὸν Τριβαλλόν νυν ἐροῦ.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ὁ Τριβαλλός, οἰμώζειν δοκεῖ σοι;

ΤΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΣ

σαὺ νάκα
 βακτάρι κροῦσα.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

φησί μ' εὖ λέγειν πάνν.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

1630 εἴ τοι δοκεῖ σφῶν ταῦτα, κάμοι συνδοκεῖ.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

οὗτος, δοκεῖ δρᾶν ταῦτα τοῦ σκῆπτρου πέρι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ νῆ Δί' ἕτερόν γ' ἐστὶν οὗ ἡμνήσθην ἐγώ.
 τὴν μὲν γὰρ Ἥραν παραδίδωμι τῷ Δί,
 τὴν δὲ Βασίλειαν τὴν κόρην γυναικ' ἐμοὶ
 ἐκδοτέον ἐστίν.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

When this guy happens to be counting his pennies or sitting in the bath, a kite will swoop down, filch a two-sheep penalty, and deliver it to the god.

The three gods withdraw for a conference.

HERACLES

I vote aye again, to give them back the sceptre.

POSEIDON

Then ask the Triballian too.

HERACLES

(waving his club) Hey Triballian, how would you like some real pain?

TRIBALLIAN GOD

No hittum hide wit bat.

HERACLES

He says I'm quite right.

POSEIDON

Well, if that's how you both vote, I'll go along with you.

HERACLES

(to Peisetaerus) You there: we've voted to accept your terms regarding the sceptre.

PEISETAERUS

And there's another request that I definitely recall making: Hera I concede to Zeus, but the girl Princess must be given to me as my wife.

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

1635 οὐ διαλλαγῶν ἐρᾶς.
ἀπίωμεν οἴκαδ' αὐθις.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὀλίγον μοι μέλει.
μάγειρε, τὸ κατάχυσμα χρὴ ποιεῖν γλυκύ.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ὦ δαιμόνι' ἀνθρώπων Πόσειδον, ποῖ φέρει;
ἡμεῖς περὶ γυναικὸς μιᾶς πολεμήσομεν;

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

τί δαὶ ποιῶμεν;

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

1640 ὅ τι; διαλλαττώμεθα.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

τί ᾧζύρ'; οὐκ οἶσθ' ἐξαπατῶμενος πάλαι;
βλάπτεις δέ τοι σὺ σαυτόν. ἦν γὰρ ἀποθάνη
ὁ Ζεὺς παραδὸνς τούτοισι τὴν τυραννίδα,
πένης ἔσει σὺ σοῦ γὰρ ἅπαντα γίγνεται
1645 τὰ χρήμαθ', ὅσ' ἂν ὁ Ζεὺς ἀποθνήσκων καταλίπη.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἶμοι τάλας, οἷόν σε περισοφίζεται.
δεῦρ' ὥς ἔμ' ἀποχώρησον, ἵνα τί σοι φράσω.
διαβάλλεται σ' ὁ θεῖος, ᾧ πόνηρε σύ.
τῶν γὰρ πατρώων οὐδ' ἀκαρῇ μέτεστί σοι
1650 κατὰ τοὺς νόμους· νόθος γὰρ εἶ κοῦ γνήσιος.

BIRDS

POSEIDON

It's not a settlement you're hot for. (*to his colleagues*) Let's go back home.

PEISETAERUS

That's of little concern to me. Cook, be sure you make the sauce sweet.

HERACLES

Man alive, Poseidon, what's your rush? Over a single woman we're out to fight a war?

POSEIDON

Well, what can we do?

HERACLES

Why, we settle.

POSEIDON

What, you chump? Don't you realize that you've been getting duped all along? What's more, you're harming yourself. Look, if Zeus surrenders his rule to these birds, you'll be left a pauper when he dies, because you now stand to get the whole estate that he leaves behind at his death.

PEISETAERUS

Good grief, how he's trying to fast-talk you! Come aside here, I want a word with you. Your uncle's out to cheat you, poor fellow. Of your father's estate you don't get a single penny; that's the law.¹⁴⁸ You see, you're a bastard, illegitimate.

¹⁴⁸ Throughout this passage, Athenian laws are assumed to apply to the gods; Heracles' mother was the mortal Alcmene, wife of Amphytryon.

ARISTOPHANES

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἐγὼ νόθος; τί λέγεις;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

σὺ μέντοι νῆ Δία
ὦν γε ξένης γυναικός. ἢ πῶς ἄν ποτε
ἐπίκληρον εἶναι τὴν Ἀθηναίαν δοκεῖς,
οὔσαν θυγατέρ', ὄντων ἀδελφῶν γνησίων;

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

1655 τί δ' ἦν ὁ πατήρ ἐμοὶ διδῶ τὰ χρήματα
νοθεῖ' ἀποθνήσκων;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὁ νόμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἐᾷ.
οὔτος ὁ Ποσειδῶν πρῶτος, ὃς ἐπαίρει σε νῦν,
ἀνθέξεταί σοι τῶν πατρώων χρημάτων
φάσκων ἀδελφὸς αὐτὸς εἶναι γνήσιος.
1660 ἐρῶ δὲ δὴ καὶ τὸν Σόλωνός σοι νόμον·
“νόθῳ δὲ μὴ εἶναι ἀγχιστείαν παίδων ὄντων
γνησίων·
1665 ἐὰν δὲ παῖδες μὴ ὦσι γνήσιοι, τοῖς ἐγγυτάτῳ
γένους
μετεῖναι τῶν χρημάτων.”

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἐμοὶ δ' ἄρ' οὐδὲν τῶν πατρώων χρημάτων
μέτεστιν;

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ μέντοι μὰ Δία. λέξον δέ μοι,

BIRDS

HERACLES

Me, a bastard? What are you talking about?

PEISETAERUS

That's exactly what you are, your mother being an alien. Why else do you think that Athena as a daughter could be called The Heiress, if she had legitimate brothers?

HERACLES

But couldn't my father at his death still leave me his property as a bastard's portion?

PEISETAERUS

The law won't let him. Poseidon here, who's now getting your hopes up, will be the first to dispute your claim to your father's property, declaring himself the legitimate brother. I'll even quote you the law of Solon:¹⁴⁹ "A bastard shall not qualify as next of kin, if there are legitimate children; if there are no legitimate children, the next of kin shall share the property."

HERACLES

You mean I have no share in my father's property?

PEISETAERUS

Absolutely none. Tell me, has your father inducted you

¹⁴⁹ Solon's codification (early sixth century), to which Athenians tended to attribute their oldest laws; for the law on intestacy cf. Demosthenes 43.51, Isaeus 6.47.

¹⁶⁵⁶ νοθεῖ ἀπο- Daubuz, cf. γρΣ^{VE}Γ S Harpocr. Pollux: νόθω
'ξαπο- *vel sim.* a

ARISTOPHANES

ἤδη σ' ὁ πατὴρ εἰσήγαγ' εἰς τοὺς φράτερας;

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

1670 οὐ δῆτ' ἐμέ γε. καὶ τοῦτ' ἐθαύμαζον πάλαι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δῆτ' ἄνω κέχηνας αἵκειαν βλέπων;
ἀλλ' ἦν μεθ' ἡμῶν ἧς, καταστήσας σ' ἐγὼ
τύραννον ὀρνίθων παρέξω σοι γάλα.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

1675 δίκαι' ἔμοιγε καὶ πάλαι δοκεῖς λέγειν
περὶ τῆς κόρης, κᾶγωγε παραδίδωμί σοι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δαὶ σὺ φής;

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

τᾶναντία ψηφίζομαι.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐν τῷ Τριβαλλῷ πᾶν τὸ πρᾶγμα. τί σὺ λέγεις;

ΤΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΣ

καλανι κοραυνα καὶ μεγάλα βασιλιναν
ὀρνιτο παραδίδωμι.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

παραδοῦναι λέγει.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

1680 μὰ τὸν Δί' οὐχ οὗτός γε παραδοῦναι λέγει,
εἰ μὴ βαβάζει γ' ὥσπερ αἱ χελιδόνες.

1681 βαβάζει γ' Bentley: βαδίζειν a

BIRDS

into his phratry yet?¹⁵⁰

HERACLES

Not me he hasn't, and that's always made me wonder.

PEISETAERUS

So why gape at the sky with an assaultive glare, when you could side with us? I'll appoint you ruler, and supply you with birds' milk.

HERACLES

Your claim to the girl sounds fair to me, as ever; I'm for handing her over to you.

PEISETAERUS

(*to Poseidon*) And what about you?

POSEIDON

I vote against.

PEISETAERUS

The whole business depends on the Triballian. (*to Triballian*) What do you say?

TRIBALLIAN GOD

Lovey tall missy Princessy I hand over birdie.

HERACLES

He says, hand her over.

POSEIDON

No, by Zeus, he's not saying hand her over; he's just twittering like the swallows.

¹⁵⁰ A religious guild whose members traced descent from a common ancestor; membership was a standard proof of citizenship, and the induction of young men as new members included lavish feasting.

ARISTOPHANES

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

οὐκοῦν παραδοῦναι ταῖς χελιδόσιν λέγει.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

σφώ νυν διαλλάττεσθε καὶ ξυμβαίνετε·
ἐγὼ δ', ἐπειδὴ σφῶν δοκεῖ, σιγήσομαι.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

1685 ἡμῖν ἄ λέγεις σὺ πάντα συγχωρεῖν δοκεῖ.
ἄλλ' ἴθι μεθ' ἡμῶν αὐτὸς εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν,
ἵνα τὴν Βασίλειαν καὶ τὰ πάντ' ἐκεῖ λάβῃς.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

εἰς καιρὸν ἄρα κατεκόπησαν οὐτοῖ
εἰς τοὺς γάμους.

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

βούλεσθε δῆτ' ἐγὼ τέως

1690 ὁπτῶ τὰ κρέα ταυτὶ μένων; ὑμεῖς δ' ἴτε.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

ὁπτᾶς σὺ κρέα; πολλήν γε τευθείαν λέγεις.
οὐκ εἶ μεθ' ἡμῶν;

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

εὖ γε μέντ' αὖν διετέθην.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλὰ γαμικὴν χλανίδα δότω τις δεῦρό μοι.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

(ἀντ) ἔστι δ' ἐν Φαναῖσι πρὸς τῇ
1695 κλειψύδρᾳ πανοῦργον Ἐγ-

BIRDS

HERACLES

All right, he's saying hand her over to the swallows.

POSEIDON

Very well, you two negotiate the terms of a settlement; if that's your decision, I'll keep quiet.

HERACLES

(to *Peisetaerus*) We've decided to agree to all your proposals. Now come with us to heaven yourself, and there get Princess and everything else.

PEISETAERUS

Then these birds have been cut up just in time for my wedding!

HERACLES

And if you like, I'll stay behind here in the meantime, and roast the meat; you go on ahead.

POSEIDON

You? Roast meat? An orgy of gobbling, you mean. Better come with us.

HERACLES

My, I would have liked that job.

PEISETAERUS

Now someone fetch me a wedding jacket!

All exit.

CHORUS

Over in the land of Extortia, near
the Water Cache,¹⁵¹ dwells the wicked

¹⁵¹ Of fountain houses and also of the device used to time speeches in Athenian lawcourts.

γλωττογαστόρων γένος,
οἱ θερίζουσίν τε καὶ σπεί-
ρουσι καὶ τρυνγῶσι ταῖς γλώτ-
ταισι συκάζουσί τε

- 1700 βάρβαροι δ' εἰσὶν γένους,
Γοργίαι τε καὶ Φίλιπποι.
κὰπὸ τῶν ἐγγλωττογαστό-
ρων ἐκείνων τῶν φιλίππων
πανταχοῦ τῆς Ἀττικῆς ἢ
1705 γλῶττα χωρὶς τέμνεται.

ΚΗΡΤΞ Β'

- ὦ πάντ' ἀγαθὰ πράττοντες, ὦ μείζω λόγον,
ὦ τρισμακάριον πτηνὸν ὀρνίθων γένος,
δέχεσθε τὸν τύραννον ὀλβίοις δόμοις.
προσέρχεται γὰρ οἷος οὔτε παμφαῆς
1710 ἀστῆρ ἰδεῖν ἔλαμψε χρυσαυγεῖ δρόμῳ,
οὔθ' ἡλίου τηλαυγὲς ἀκτίνων σέλας
τοιούτον ἐξέλαμψεν οἷος ἔρχεται
ἔχων γυναικὸς κάλλος οὐ φατὸν λέγειν,
πάλλων κεραυνόν, πτεροφόρον Διὸς βέλος.
1715 ὁσμὴ δ' ἀνωνόμαστος εἰς βάθος κύκλου
χωρεῖ, καλὸν θέαμα, θυμιαμάτων δ'
αὔραι διαψαίρουσι πλεκτάνην καπνοῦ.

1710 δρόμῳ E p: δόμῳ cett.

1712 οἷος Dindorf: οἶον a

BIRDS

race of Thrive-by-Tongues,
who do their harvesting and sowing
and vintaging by tongue,
and also their culling.
They're a race of barbarians,
Gorgiases and Philippuses.¹⁵²
It's from these philippic
Thrive-by-Tongues
that all over Attica
the tongue is specially excised.¹⁵³

Enter SECOND HERALD.

SECOND HERALD

Attention, you achievers of complete success, greater than words can say, you triple-blessed winged race of birds: welcome your ruler to his prosperous palace! Yea he draws near, more dazzling to behold than any meteor flaring on its path of golden beams, more than even the flare of the sun's far-beaming splendor of rays, as he comes bringing a lady of beauty surpassing description, and brandishing the thunderbolt, winged missile of Zeus. A fragrance unnamable ascends to the welkin's very depths, a fair spectacle, and breezes puff asunder the wreaths of smoke from the incense.

Enter PEISETAERUS, wielding the thunderbolt, with Princess, as royal couple.

¹⁵² Gorgias, a Sicilian, taught rhetoric at Athens, and Philippus (a common name) was either his son (cf. *Wasps* 421) or a disciple.

¹⁵³ In sacrifices, cf. *Peace* 1109, Homer, *Odyssey* 3.332–41.

ARISTOPHANES

ὁδὶ δὲ καὐτός ἐστιν. ἀλλὰ χρὴ θεᾶς
μούσης ἀνοίγειν ἱερὸν εὐφημον στόμα.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

- 1720 ἄναγε δῖεχε πάραγε πάρεχε,
περιπέτεσθε μάκαρα μάκαρι σὺν τύχῃ.
ὦ φεῦ φεῦ τῆς ὥρας, τοῦ κάλλους.
1725 ὦ μακαριστὸν σὺ γάμον τῇδε πόλει γήμας.

ΚΟΡΤΦΑΙΟΣ

- μεγάλαι μεγάλαι κατέχουσι τύχαι
γένος ὀρνίθων
διὰ τόνδε τὸν ἄνδρ'. ἀλλ' ὑμεναίοις
καὶ νυμφιδίοισι δέχεσθ' ὦδαῖς
1730 αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν Βασίλειαν.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

- (στρ) Ἦρα ποτ' Ὀλυμπία
τὸν ἡλιβάτων θρόνων
ἄρχοντα θεοῖς μέγαν
Μοῖραι ξυνεκοκίμισαν
1735 ἐν τοιῷδ' ὑμεναίῳ.
'Τμὴν ὦ, 'Τμέναι' ὦ.
<'Τμὴν ὦ, 'Τμέναι' ὦ.>
(ἀντ) ὁ δ' ἀμφιθαλὴς Ἑρως
χρυσόπτερος ἡνίας
ἠϋθυνε παλιντόνους,
1740 Ζηνὸς πάροχος γάμων

1734 suppl. Bentley

1736b suppl. Dindorf

BIRDS

And here he is himself! Now let the divine Muse open her
holy lips in auspicious song!

Exit SECOND HERALD.

CHORUS

Get back! Divide! Form up! Make room!
Fly by the man blest with blest luck!
My oh my, her youth, her beauty!
What a blessing for this city is the marriage you have
made!

CHORUS LEADER

Great, great is the luck that embraces
the race of birds
thanks to this man; now with wedding
and bridal songs please welcome
Himself and His Princess!

CHORUS

Once were Olympian Hera
and the mighty lord of the lofty
throne of the gods
united by the Fates
with such a wedding song.
Hymen Hymenaeus!
Hymen Hymenaeus!

And blooming Eros
of the golden wings guided
the straining reins
as best man at the wedding

ARISTOPHANES

τῆς τ' εὐδαίμονος Ἥρας.
 Ὑμῆν ὦ, Ὑμέναι' ὦ.
 Ὑμῆν ὦ, Ὑμέναι' ὦ.

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐχάρην ὕμνοις, ἐχάρην ὦδαϊς·
 ἄγαμαι δὲ λόγων.

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

1745 ἄγε νυν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰς χθονίας
 κλήσατε βροντὰς
 τάς τε πυρώδεις Διὸς ἀστεροπὰς
 δεινὸν τ' ἀργῆτα κεραυνόν.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὦ μέγα χρύσειον ἀστεροπῆς φάος
 ὦ Διὸς ἄμβροτον ἔγχος
 1750 πυρφόρον, ὦ χθόνιαι βαρναχέες
 ὀμβροφόροι θ' ἅμα βρονταί,
 αἷς ὅδε νῦν χθόνα σείει,
 Δία δὲ πάντα κρατήσας
 καὶ πάρεδρον Βασίλειαν ἔχει Διός.
 Ὑμῆν ὦ, Ὑμέναι' ὦ.

ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ

1755 ἔπεσθέ νυν γάμοισιν, ὦ
 φύλα πάντα συννόμων
 πτεροφόρ', ἐπὶ <δά>πεδον Διὸς
 καὶ λέχος γαμήλιον.

BIRDS

of Zeus and thriving Hera.
Hymen Hymenaeus!
Hymen Hymenaeus!

PEISETAERUS

I'm pleased by your chants, pleased by your songs,
and bowled over by your words.

CHORUS LEADER

Come then, celebrate too
his earth-shaking thunders
and the fiery lightnings of Zeus
and the awesome fulgent thunderbolt.

CHORUS

Great golden glare of lightning!
Zeus' immortal fire-bearing
shaft! Thunders rumbling heavily
in the ground and also bringing rain!
With you this man now shakes the earth,
new master of Zeus' estate
and of Princess, attendant of Zeus' throne.
Hymen Hymenaeus!

CHORUS LEADER

Follow now the wedding party,
all you winged tribes
of fellow songsters, to Zeus' yard
and to the bridal bower.

1752 $\Delta\iota\alpha\ \delta\epsilon$ Haupt: $\delta\iota\alpha\ \sigma\epsilon\ \tau\alpha\ a$

1757 suppl. Meineke

ARISTOPHANES

ΠΕΙΣΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

1760 ὄρεξον, ὦ μάκαιρα, σὴν
 χείρα καὶ πτερῶν ἐμῶν
 λαβοῦσα συγχόρευσον· αἵ-
 ρων δὲ κουφιῶ σ' ἐγώ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

1765 ἀλαλαλαί, ἰὴ παιών·
 τήνελλα καλλίνικος, ὦ
 δαιμόνων ὑπέρτατε.

BIRDS

PEISETAERUS

Hold out your hand, my happy one,
and holding to my wings
join me for a dance; I'll
lift you up and swing you!

*PEISETAERUS and Princess, dancing, lead the way off; the
Chorus follow.*

CHORUS

Hip hip hooray! Hail Paeon!
Hail your success, you
highest of divinities!